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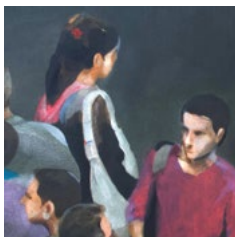

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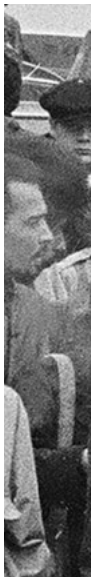

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BY THE EDITORS OF RETHINKING SCHOOLS

Gaza and the Growing Attack on Social Justice Teaching

Twenty-two million public school students, almost half of all children going to public schools, now live in states that have enacted restrictions on anti-racist teaching. As a result, a 2023 RAND Corporation survey found that nearly two-thirds of teachers in the United States decided to limit discussions about political and social issues in their classrooms. The combination of repressive laws, takeovers of school boards, and firing or disciplining anti-racist and LGBTQ-inclusive educators has been a successful strategy for the right — causing teachers across the country to leave the profession and encouraging many who have stayed to avoid "controversial" topics.

Israel's war on Gaza and the simultaneous crackdown on dissent has given another boost to the forces of repression. As this editorial went to print, Gazans were on the brink of famine and Israel was preparing a ground invasion of Rafah, Gaza's southernmost city, previously labeled a "safe zone" to which the Israeli military had pushed more than 1.5 million Palestinians. The death toll in Gaza reached more than 31,000 — more than 13,000 of whom are children. Indeed, in November, when the death toll was much lower, the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres warned Gaza was becoming "a graveyard for children." Other U.N. officials — another demographic Israel's bombardment has killed at alarming rates — have described conditions as "the worst ever" humanitarian crisis, a "living nightmare," which is "absolutely unprecedented and staggering."

At the beginning of March, almost all schools in Gaza, more than 70 percent of which "have sustained damage," were being used as shelters for the 1.7 million internally displaced people. (For more on the attack on children and education, see p. 12.) The healthcare system was near total collapse with only 12 out of 36 hospitals "partially functional," overwhelmed and unable to provide basic medicine and care.

On Jan. 26, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that there is a "real and imminent risk" that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza and, despite falling short of demanding Israel suspend its military operations, ordered six provisional measures to "prevent irreparable harm" to Palestinians. The case against Israel, brought by South Africa, documents an unfolding genocide against the Palestinian people, including "intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population, civilian objects and buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science, historic monuments, hospitals, and places where the sick and wounded are collected; torture; the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare; and other war crimes and crimes against humanity." It includes more than a dozen public admissions from Israeli political and military leaders like that of security cabinet member Avi Dichter that Israel is "rolling out the Gaza Nakba" — referring to the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians and seizure of land in 1948.

Yet despite the mounting evidence, and despite being taken to federal court for its failure to prevent this unfolding genocide, the Biden administration refuses to even place conditions on the

more than $10 million in aid the United States provides Israel daily. Indeed when Israel, shortly after the ICJ ruling and without evidence, accused 12 U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) staff of being involved in Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, the Biden administration immediately announced that it would cut aid to UNRWA — the largest humanitarian aid organization in Gaza. The United States is now funding genocide while simultaneously defunding those attempting to prevent it.

Educators of conscience everywhere should be — and are — discussing this in the classroom. But teachers who attempt this difficult task have been met with increasing repression. Even showing support for Palestinians online has been cause for disciplinary action.

Four teachers in Montgomery County, Maryland, were placed on administrative leave for public expressions of support for Palestinians. A charter school in Los Angeles fired two 1st-grade teachers and placed their principal on leave after one teacher revealed on Instagram they had taught a "lesson on the genocide in Palestine." School authorities placed another 1st-grade teacher in Palm Beach, Florida, on administrative leave after she sent a letter to her district's leadership asking them to "publicly recognize the Palestinian community" in their communications about the crisis. The Decatur, Georgia, school district suspended their equity coordinator for sharing "Resources for Learning & Actions to Support Gaza."

Fueled at the highest levels of government, this is part of a broader crackdown on those who speak up for Palestinian rights. After a congressional hearing where mostly Republican lawmakers grilled the presidents of Harvard, MIT, and the University of Pennsylvania for five hours about Palestinian rights activism on their campuses and falsely equated that activism with antisemitism, two of the three presidents — including Claudine Gay, Harvard's first Black president — resigned. Four universities

— Columbia, Brandeis, George Washington, and Rutgers — have suspended campus chapters of Students for Justice in Palestine. The campus chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace was also suspended at Columbia. In Arizona, Tom Horne, the same state superintendent who led the campaign to shut down Tucson's exemplary Mexican American Studies program, urged school districts to bar student clubs like Amnesty International and UNICEF because they "generate antisemitism among impressionable young people."

This suppression of dissent — largely focused on educational institutions — is part of the broader wave of restricting social justice teaching. Like the educators removed for teaching about racial justice or creating safe and welcoming spaces for LGBTQ+ youth, many of the teachers accused of antisemitism are veteran educators with long histories of fighting racism and oppression.

Although antisemitism is certainly on the rise alongside a resurgence of white nationalism — most infamously on display in 2017 as demonstrators chanted "Jews will not replace us!" at the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville — this white supremacist antisemitism is not what these anti-racist educators are being disciplined for. Indeed, many of the loudest voices equating criticism of Israel with antisemitism are encouraging the white supremacist resurgence. Take for example Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY), who led the House inquisition against university presidents. She previously ran campaign ads parroting the white supremacist "great replacement" theory: the idea that elite politicians are attempting to replace white Americans and their influence with non-white immigrants. "Radical Democrats" are planning a "PERMANENT ELECTION INSURRECTION," claimed her ad, "Their plan to grant amnesty to 11 MILLION illegal immigrants will overthrow our current electorate and create a permanent liberal majority in Washington." She also slammed New York's plan to reopen schools after the COVID-19 pandemic — a plan that mentions racism four times in 263 pages — as "using COVID funds to force the radical and racist critical race theory agenda on our children."

When Claudine Gay resigned as president of Harvard, Christopher Rufo, the architect of the conservative assault on anti-racist teaching, celebrated on Twitter, now rebranded as X. He wrote, "SCALPED." In referring to the practice of white colonists who collected gruesome trophies as they sought to exterminate Native Americans, Rufo was claiming Gay's resignation as a victory for the movement he helped initiate.

These racist pundits and politicians are escalating their suppression of anti-racist voices by mislabeling legitimate criticism of Israeli policy as antisemitism. Not only does this ignore the Jews across the country who have been at the forefront of the movement for a cease-fire, it also dangerously ties the fate of the Jewish diaspora to the war crimes of the Israeli government — strengthening real antisemitism. This harmful conflation is fueled by statements like President Biden's at a White House Hanukkah event where he said, "Were there no Israel, there wouldn't be a Jew in the world who is safe." And it is also powered by school administrators who recklessly label teachers antisemitic and discipline them for attempts to teach about Palestine.

At an online forum titled "Fighting Antisemitism Through the Lens of Collective Liberation," Jewish Voice for Peace Action Political Director Beth Miller explained,

> All of these resolutions, these hearings, these speeches, this language coming out of the highest-ranking folks in our government, what it is doing is actively endangering Jewish communities and it is actively endangering Palestinian communities and excusing and fueling the ongoing genocide against Palestinians. Because to be clear: There is rising antisemitism in this country and it's scary. And there is rising anti-Palestinian racism in this country and it is scary. And what Congress is doing is fueling both of them at the exact same time.

It is not the educators attempting to discuss the crisis in Gaza in their classrooms who endanger Jewish and Palestinian students — but those silencing these discussions and in doing so, preventing a deeper understanding that lifts up a diverse range of Jewish and Palestinian voices, and includes a critical look at what is — and what is not — antisemitism. (See Bill Bigelow's "No, Anti-Zionism Is Not Antisemitism" on p. 8 introducing a new lesson to bring these discussions into the classroom.)

Despite how frightening it can feel as social justice educators at this moment, the more we let our fear silence us the more we allow this campaign of terror to win and creeping fascism to take hold. Instead, we should understand and take hope in the reason this backlash has grown in intensity: More people than ever are refusing to stay quiet in the face of racism and injustice. As author Naomi Klein — whose excellent chapters on the diverse Jewish intellectual tradition in her new book *Doppelganger* are now publicly available online — stated in a recent webinar when asked about the repression of critics of Israel, "The thing is that they cannot silence as many people as are speaking up right now. This is just in my view, one of those courage moments. Stick with it. It's working. That's why you're getting so much propaganda thrown at you." Indeed, the larger backlash against social justice teaching is an effort to roll back the many gains made during and after the 2020 Black Lives Matter uprising — where an unprecedented number of people took to the streets for racial justice.

So while being a social justice teacher right now can feel isolating, we are not alone. In December, several Rethinking

Schools editors went to the National Council for the Social Studies conference and attended Amanda Najib's session on Palestine. With standing room only, it was one of the most well-attended sessions at the conference. A growing number of teacher union locals from Seattle to Chicago to Massachusetts have called for a cease-fire. Despite intense repression, nearly 100 teachers signed up to participate in the Oakland, California, educators teach-in for Palestine. (See "What We Learned from Our 'Oakland to Gaza' K–12 Teach-In" on p. 18.) On Jan. 20, more than 90 teachers spent the day learning about and discussing how to teach about Palestine at a conference in Oakland put on by the Middle East Children's Alliance. Our Zinn Education Project continues to average about 1,000 new registrants every month. It is clear there continues to be a growing hunger for social justice curriculum.

It's more important than ever to build networks of solidarity and mutual aid — spaces where we can share how we are teaching about difficult topics like Gaza, where we can build a curriculum to challenge the dominant narrative that what is happening in Palestine began on Oct. 7, where we can defend one another in the face of repression. That is the task before us: to knit together and strengthen the networks of teachers, parents, and students that can take bold action and muster the defiance necessary to break through the backlash.

And we should draw courage from an understanding that any risks we face do not compare to the risks faced by those under Israel's bombs — made in the U.S.A. As Palestinian poet Refaat Alareer, killed in an Israeli airstrike along with six members of his family on Dec. 7, powerfully pleaded:

> If I must die,
> you must live
> to tell my story . . .
> If I must die
> let it bring hope
> let it be a tale. ●

NEW

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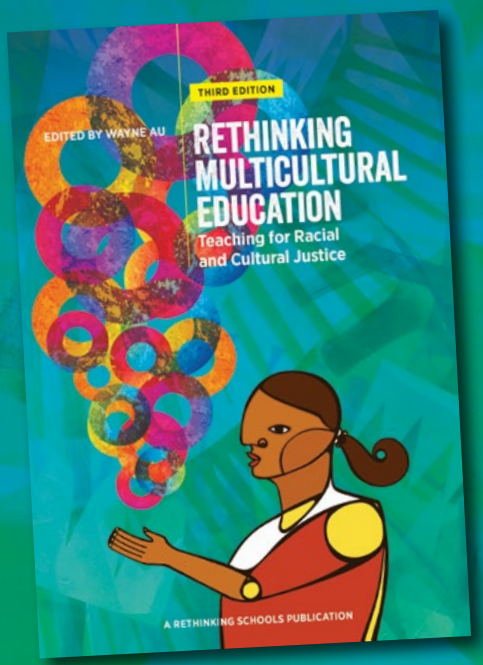
EDITED BY WAYNE AU



From book bans, to teacher firings, to racist content standards, the politics of teaching race and culture in schools have shifted dramatically in recent years. This third edition of *Rethinking Multicultural Education* has been greatly revised and expanded to reflect these changing times. Practical, rich in story, and analytically sharp, *Rethinking Multicultural Education* can help current and future educators as they seek to bring racial and cultural justice into their own classrooms.

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No, Anti-Zionism Is Not Antisemitism

BY BILL BIGELOW

As the bombs fell in Gaza, one strategy that the right wing and, yes, many "liberals," adopted to silence activists — and social justice educators — was to claim that to oppose Zionism is automatically antisemitic. In December, the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed a resolution — 311 to 14, with 92 voting "present" — that "clearly and firmly states that anti-Zionism is antisemitism."

It is not.

Yes, there are examples of the entanglement of anti-Zionism and antisemitism. But this resolution is an effort to silence critics of Israeli aggression and U.S. complicity by insisting that opposition to Zionism is — and has always been — antisemitic. The courageous Jewish Voice for Peace and IfNotNow activists featured in the new film *Israelism* demonstrate how wrong this conflation is. But so does knowing some history of Zionism and Palestine.

I've spent the past several weeks working on a role play that explores the "seeds of violence" in Palestine-Israel. It covers early Zionist immigration to Palestine during the Ottoman period — late 19th, early 20th century — up through the first years of the British Mandate in the 1920s. In the activity, students attempt to "become" individuals whose lives intersected with one another — and who sometimes clashed over whether or not Palestine should become a "national home for the Jewish people," as Lord Balfour wrote in the fateful one-sentence Balfour Declaration in 1917. (The activity is available at our Zinn Education Project.)

I include roles on the "father" of Zionism, Theodor Herzl; an idealistic young radical Zionist of the second Aliyah Jewish migration to Palestine, which began about 1904; and Arthur Ruppin, the prominent Zionist land agent of the Jewish Agency in Palestine. As Herzl writes in his seminal *The Jewish State*, the Zionists' mission was to establish a Jewish "national homeland" in Palestine: "a rampart of

Ramallah Family, circa 1900.

ALPHA STOCK / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism."

One role features a wealthy absentee Beirut landlord, Elias Sursuq, who owned vast tracts in Palestine and was happy to profit from land sales to the new arrivals from Europe. Landlords like Sursuq sold prime agricultural land to Zionists who had no place for Palestinians in their planned national homeland and expelled peasants — *fellahin* — who'd lived on and farmed the land for generations. As Ruppin wrote, "We are bound in each case of the purchase of land and its settlement to remove the peasants who cultivated the land so far, both owners of the land and tenants."

Palestinians resisted their displacement by Zionist settlers. Peasants organized and fought to hold on to their land. Newspaper editors like Najib Nassar and 'Isa al-'Isa, also included in the role play, amplified the peasants' anger, and wrote articles and editorials warning about the Zionists' ultimate plans for Palestine. As al-'Isa wrote in 1914: "[We are] a nation threatened with disappearance by the Zionist tide in this Palestinian land . . . a nation that is threatened in its very being with expulsion from its homeland."

But here's the thing: In the world — and in the individuals students encounter in the role play — some of the fiercest critics of Zionism were other Jews. Students meet Yosef Castel, a Sephardi Jew whose family had lived in Jerusalem since King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella expelled the Jews from Spain in 1492. He and other Sephardi Jews lived contentedly, as Jacob Yehoshua wrote, in "joint compounds of Jews and Muslims. We were like one family. . . . Our children played with their [the Muslim] children in the yard, and if children from the neighborhood hurt us, the Muslim children who lived in our compound protected us. They were our allies." Many Sephardi Jews, like Castel, opposed the ethnic separatism that Zionists were so militantly committed to. In 1921, Castel wrote, "Both sides [Palestinians and Zionists] are fighting each other over a single land [Palestine], and they must, as a matter of historical necessity, live in it together and peacefully develop their national homes in the same land, which is destined to be one state."

Another anti-Zionist Jew who students encounter is Pati Kremer, a member of the socialist Jewish Bund in what was then Russia. As her role indicates, "Working-class Jews had a choice: socialism or Zionism." The Zionists urged flight instead of fight. While members of the Bund were committed to the struggle for Jewish cultural rights and socialism in Eastern Europe, Zionists saw hope only in immigration to Palestine. As Kremer's role articulates, working-class Jews should have "no desire to go to Palestine, where Jewish capitalists would continue to exploit us."

Also featured in the role play is the Christian Zionist President Woodrow Wilson, who in 1919 was petitioned by prominent anti-Zionist U.S. Jews — congressmen, former ambassadors and consuls, surgeons, businessmen, rabbis, professors, attorneys, and even Adolph S. Ochs, publisher of the *New York Times*. The March 5, 1919, *Times* published the full text of the anti-Zionist petition, "setting forth our objections to the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine . . . and to the segregation of the Jews as a nationalistic unit in any country." Petitioners wrote that "The American Zionists represent, according to the most recent statistics available, only a small proportion of the Jews living in this country . . ."

The petition offered four arguments against Zionism: 1. The "establishment of a sovereign state in Palestine" implied that Jews in other countries held a "double allegiance." Zionists are "under the spell of an emotional romanticism or of a religious sentiment fostered by centuries of gloom." 2. Not all Jews will be able to immigrate to Palestine, and in many countries, Jews will be branded as aliens, it will put their safety at risk, and justify more repressive legislation. 3. There are other people living in Palestine, and Zionist settlement will "provoke bitter controversies." These "bitter and sanguinary conflicts . . . would be inevitable . . ." 4. "[T]he reestablishment in Palestine of a distinctively Jewish State is utterly opposed to the principles of democracy . . ."

Finally, it is worth remembering, that there were — and are today — Zionists who are antisemitic. For example, as students learn in the role play, Lord Balfour himself was both a Zionist and an antisemite who pushed the 1905 Aliens Act in Great Britain, expressly to keep out Jews — "undesirable immigrants" — fleeing the horrors of Eastern European pogroms.

In the role play, students have conversations that surface different perspectives on Palestine, Zionism, and justice. The seeds of today's violence were planted in those turn-of-the-century years — by the choices made and the alternatives left on the table. Students can see it themselves as they encounter conflicting visions for the future of Palestine.

It is not simply my opinion that anti-Zionism is not necessarily antisemitism, as the U.S. House of Representatives insists. That's what history teaches. And this is as true today as it was 100 years ago — as mentioned, witness the inspirational anti-Zionist activism of groups like Jewish Voice for Peace and IfNotNow. Educators should not be bullied by politicians — or by their own administrators — who use phony claims about anti-Zionism in their attempt to suppress a curriculum that seeks to honestly understand the dynamics that led to today's tragic events in historic Palestine. Zionism needs a critical look in our classrooms — it's sound history, it's good teaching. ●

Bill Bigelow (bbpdx@aol.com) is curriculum editor of Rethinking Schools.

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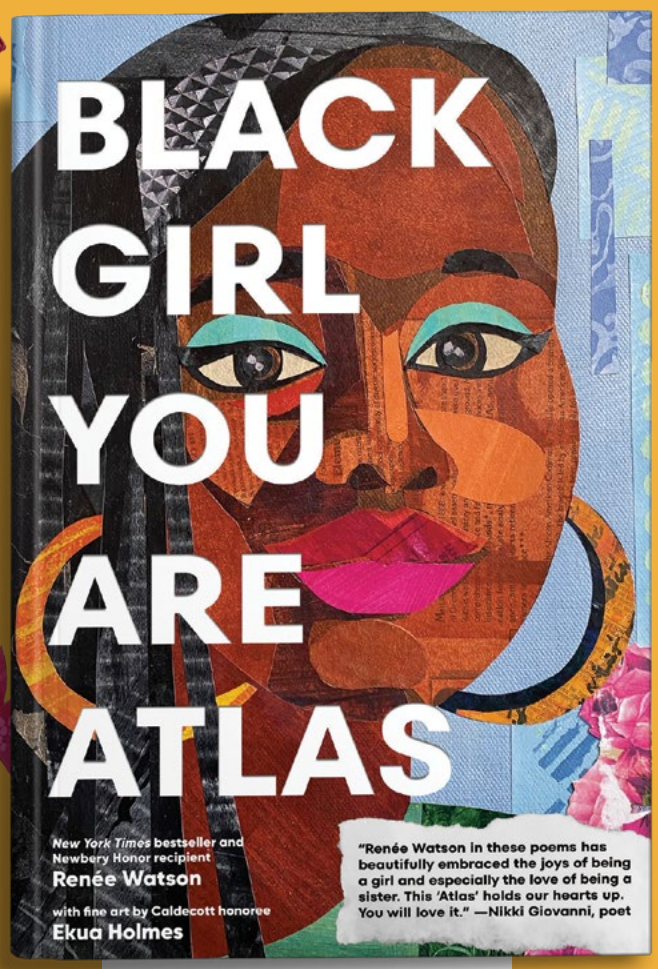
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Israel's War on Gaza Is Also a

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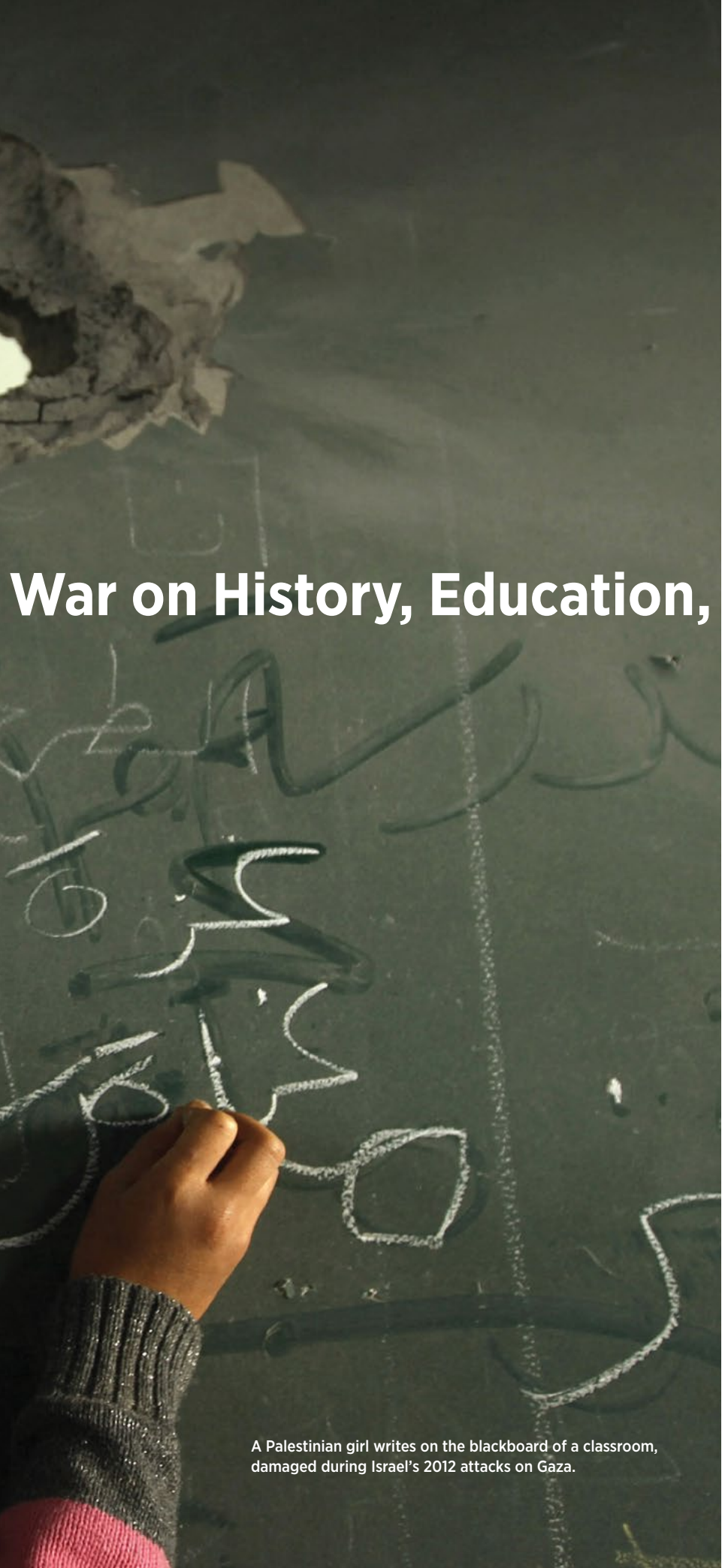


A Palestinian girl writes on the blackboard of a classroom, damaged during Israel's 2012 attacks on Gaza.

BY JESSE HAGOPIAN

War on History, Education, and Children

In one weekend last November, Israeli airstrikes killed at least 82 Palestinians in Gaza's Jabalia refugee camp, including victims at multiple United Nations schools. Israel's genocidal war on Gaza has already killed more than 31,000 Palestinians in Gaza, including more than 13,000 children, with Gaza's Health Ministry reporting that one Palestinian child is killed every 10 minutes. U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres described the carnage as turning Gaza into a "graveyard for children."

Jesse Hagopian is a Rethinking Schools editor, a high school teacher, and on the staff of the Zinn Education Project. He is the co-editor of the Rethinking Schools book Teaching for Black Lives. He also serves on the Black Lives Matter at School steering committee and is the director of the Black Education Matters Student Activist Award.

The grim reality is that not even the schools have been saved from being turned into cemeteries.

"People in Gaza, sadly, are used to wars, and they're used to sheltering in United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) schools, because this is where they feel that there's sanctity, a U.N. and a global understanding that when someone is in the protection of the United Nations, that these buildings will not be targeted," said Tamara Alrifai, spokesperson for UNRWA, the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, in an interview on *Democracy Now!* "Sadly, this is not the case."

Since Oct. 7, the 625,000 children enrolled in schools across Gaza have been deprived of education because of Israel's relentless bombardment that has damaged some 395 schools, comprising more than 70 percent of all educational institutions in Gaza. When Israel blew up Al-Isra University in Gaza on Jan. 17, it succeeded in destroying every university in Gaza.

In addition to bombing schools, Israel has destroyed or damaged nearly 200 sites of historical importance. This includes levelling Gaza's main public library and two of Gaza's four museums, maintaining Israel's long history of attacking historical knowledge and education. That's because it is difficult to perpetuate ethnic cleansing — while simultaneously purporting to be a democracy — without also controlling the population's collective memory and whitewashing the brutality from the historical record.

The destruction of ways of knowing and understanding the world is a practice that sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos has called "epistemicide." This includes attempting to destroy cultural knowledge, anti-racist ideas, and frameworks for understanding how to challenge oppression and colonization. Israel clearly has studied the long and violent history of attacking not only the bodies of colonized people, but also bodies of knowledge that can help oppressed populations in their struggles for freedom.

There are many examples of epistemicide in the United States, from the anti-literacy laws imposed on enslaved African people; to the boarding schools for Native American children designed to strip them of their culture and deny them the truth of how they were dispossessed of their land; to the laws banning anti-racist education today that impact almost half of all U.S. students. For example, Florida banned the Advanced Placement African American Studies course, and the official state curriculum now declares slavery to have been of "personal benefit" to Black people. Teachers in Florida can now be charged with a felony, that carries up to a five-year jail sentence, for being caught with a contraband book about race, gender, or sexuality.

Israel has taken notes on this strategy — as well as borrowing from British colonialism — and has long worked to

camouflage its settler-colonial origin. As Rashid Khalidi explains in his masterful book *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine*, "The British treated the Palestinians with the same contemptuous condescension they lavished on other subject peoples from Hong Kong to Jamaica. . . . As in Egypt and India, they did little to advance education, since colonial conventional wisdom held that too much of it produced 'natives' who did not know their proper place."

The colonial refrain of Israeli settlers that Palestine was a "land without people for a people without land" mirrors the delusion of manifest destiny, where American settlers claimed that God gave them the right to steal land for their own project of colonization. These master narratives, which have informed much of the colonial education in both nations, are the frameworks that allow so many people to accept the ongoing occupation of Indigenous land and the brutal violence against its inhabitants.

In 2009, Israel's education ministry ordered the removal of the word Nakba from textbooks for Arab schoolchildren. Nakba is Arabic for the "catastrophe" inflicted on Palestinians in 1947 and 1948 during the establishment of the state of Israel that resulted in the displacement of more than 700,000 Palestinians and the death of some 1,434 Palestinians, including more than 400 children.

In 2011, Israel passed the "Nakba law," which allows the Israeli government to cut funding to any public institution that teaches about the event. "The purpose of the bill is to prevent members of the Arab minority in Israel from exercising their democratic right to commemorate a seminal event in their history," wrote Adalah – the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, as the bill was being debated. "This legislation will cause harm to cultural and educational institutions that teach about the Nakba by cutting their funding and will further entrench inequality and discrimination. The bill is both anti-democratic and discriminatory."

On Nov. 9, Israeli police arrested Meir Baruchin, a Jerusalem history and civics teacher, following his post on Facebook expressing opposition to the killing of innocent Palestinian civilians. Upon his arrest, authorities confiscated his phone and two laptops, interrogating him on suspicion of treason and intent to disrupt the public order. After spending four days in jail, Baruchin was released, but he was fired from his teaching position, had his teaching certificate revoked, and continues to face legal charges.

"These days Israeli citizens who are showing the slightest sentiment for the people of Gaza, opposing killing of innocent civilians, they are being politically persecuted, they go through public shaming, they lose their jobs, they are being put in jail," Baruchin said in an interview on *Democracy Now!* He added that he believes if he were Palestinian, the consequences would have been more severe.

Educators in the United States who believe students should have the right to grapple with multiple perspectives on the founding of Israel and the relentless bombardment of Gaza — including lessons that provide Palestinian perspectives — have faced harsh censure for many years. These attacks have dramatically intensified.

Radhika Sainath, a senior staff attorney at Palestine Legal, which defends the free speech rights of advocates for Palestine, revealed the alarming escalation in these attacks: "We've had an exponential surge in requests for legal help. It has been like nothing we've seen before." In the 11 days following Oct. 7, the organization responded to nearly 200 reports of "suppression of Palestinian rights advocacy" in the United States — almost as many incidents as they had addressed in all of the previous year.

The educational system in Israel and Palestine is shaped by the daily violence of a system of apartheid, followed by the intermittent outbreak of devastating wars. During the 2014 military assault on Gaza known as "Operation Protective Edge," Israelis killed 412 students and damaged 14 higher education facilities. Even before the recent hostilities, children in Gaza were grappling with profound mental health challenges inflicted by the enduring blockade and attacks on their schools. A report published in June 2022 by Save the Children revealed that 80 percent of Gazan children suffer from a perpetual state of worry, sadness, and grief, with more than three quarters of children bed-wetting from fear, and a growing number exhibiting reactive mutism.

> It is difficult to perpetuate ethnic cleansing without whitewashing the brutality from the historical record.

Palestinian schools have been subjected to attacks and severe restrictions imposed on "Area C" of the occupied West Bank. This area constitutes 61 percent of the territory and has faced continuous limitations on school construction. According to a report released on May 3, 2023, by the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the Palestinian population has witnessed a 2.4 percent growth, necessitating the establishment of 600 new schools by 2025.

But Israel significantly hinders the progress in constructing new schools. Challenges related to funding and bureaucratic obstacles have resulted in the construction of only 68 schools since

2020. The U.N. report also explained that since 2010, Israel has conducted 36 demolitions, affecting 20 schools in occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

In September 2017, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) issued a joint statement with Save the Children decrying Israel's recent demolition of three elementary schools and stated that "Many children have to study in schools with little protection from the heat or the cold; some face long journeys, delays at military checkpoints, harassment and violence, military activity in or around the school, or have to cross military areas and firing zones."

Israel — apparently inspired by the U.S. system of schooling and policing that has contributed to more Black people being incarcerated or under the jurisdiction of the legal system today than were enslaved in 1850 — has created its own particularly vicious form of the school-to-prison pipeline. Between 500 and 700 Palestinian children, on average, are prosecuted in the military court system every year. Since 2000, Israel has detained more than 12,000 youth. And since August 2019, there has been an escalation in Palestinian students being subjected to prolonged and arbitrary military detention. Israel routinely detains students for exercising their rights to assembly, association, and expression.

Palestinian students and teachers encounter daily hardships: They're forced to navigate checkpoints and endure delays, detentions, and harassment by Israeli soldiers and settlers. The imposed separation of East Jerusalem from other occupied Palestinian territories further hinders Palestinians' access to educational resources and cultural centers.

What's more, travel bans on students and academics, introduced by Israel since 2000 and exacerbated by the 2007 blockade, have prevented Palestinians in Gaza from pursuing education in the West Bank and from attending universities established for their benefit.

Christopher Rufo, one of the primary instigators of the attack on critical race theory and anti-racist curriculum in the United States, laid out his colonial strategy for using education to help maintain Israeli and U.S. military power: "Conservatives need to create a strong association between Hamas, [Black Lives Matter], [Democratic Socialists of America], and academic 'decolonization' in the public mind. Connect the dots, then attack, delegitimize, and discredit. Make the center-left disavow them. Make them political untouchables."

Yet despite this strategy, a growing mass movement has coalesced in the United States and around the world to demand an immediate end to the indiscriminate killing of Palestinians. People across the globe have flooded the streets chanting "Cease-Fire Now," and students and educators have played a central role in this struggle. Students for Justice in Palestine has been an important part of the movement. Many teacher union locals around the United States — such as in Seattle, Minneapolis, Chicago, Massachusetts, and the American Federation of Teachers-Oregon — have voted for a cease-fire and marched in support of Palestine along with the organization Black Lives Matter at School.

Young Jewish people have also played an important role in the movement, including organizing acts of mass civil disobedience to call for a cease-fire in Gaza. As author Dave Zirin, who is Jewish, wrote, "An entire generation of young Jews, to paraphrase Peter Beinart a decade ago, are feeling forced to choose between their progressive principles and support for Israel's total war — and they are choosing their principles. Through organizations like Jewish Voice for Peace and IfNotNow, Jewish youth are looking at Israel's human rights violations and saying clearly, 'Not in our name.'"

These allies are supporting young Palestinians across the diaspora who lead the movement for a free Palestine. On Nov. 7, a group of children held a press conference outside the Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City to implore the world to intervene to stop Israel's relentless bombing campaign.

"Since Oct. 7, we've faced extermination, killing, bombing over our heads — all of this in front of the world," one young spokesperson for the group said in English. "They lied to the world that they kill the fighters, but they kill the people of Gaza, their dreams and their future. Kids of Gaza run out of their hopes and wants."

Sporting a shirt with a panda bear and gripping a sheet of note paper in his left hand, he continued: "We came to Al-Shifa Hospital to seek shelter from the bombing, but we suddenly faced death again when they targeted the hospital. The occupation is starving us. We don't find water, food, and we drink from the unusable water. We come now to shout and invite you to protect us."

Standing shoulder to shoulder with his peers, and near a hospital bed with injured children on his right, he concluded: "We want to live, we want peace, we want to judge the killers of children. We want medicine, food, and education. We want to live as the other children live."

Every child deserves medicine, food, and an education that respects their culture and empowers them with the historical lessons they need to challenge war, racism, and oppression today.

We must call for a permanent cease-fire — not just a temporary pause — to end the bombing of Gaza and a cease-fire to end the attempts to obliterate the lessons of history that young people need as they struggle to attain social justice as a basis for a lasting peace.

Free Palestine and free Palestine Pedagogy. ●

KHALED HOURANI

Before I Was a Gazan

BY NAOMI SHIHAB NYE

I was a boy
and my homework was missing,
paper with numbers on it,
stacked and lined,
I was looking for my piece of paper,
proud of this plus that, then multiplied,
not remembering if I had left it
on the table after showing to my uncle
or the shelf after combing my hair
but it was still somewhere
and I was going to find it and turn it in,
make my teacher happy,
make her say my name to the whole class,
before everything got subtracted
in a minute
even my uncle
even my teacher
even the best math student and his baby sister
who couldn't talk yet.
And now I would do anything
for a problem I could solve.

Naomi Shihab Nye is a poet, songwriter, and novelist. She is the author of numerous books of poetry. This poem is included in Everything Comes Next: Collected and New Poems. *Used by permission of HarperCollins.*

Artist Khaled Hourani's art can be seen at instagram.com/khaledhourani6.

What We Learned from Our "Oakland to Gaza" K–12 Teach-In

BY MEMBERS OF THE OAKLAND EDUCATION ASSOCIATION FOR PALESTINE GROUP

More than 20 U.S. educator unions have passed resolutions calling for a cease-fire in Gaza, some going as far as to label Israel an apartheid state and an occupying force. National Education Association President Becky Pringle issued a personal statement in support of a cease-fire. Our own union, the Oakland Education Association (OEA), also passed a resolution at our Nov. 4 Representative Council calling for an immediate cease-fire and an end to the Israeli occupation and encouraging union members to show their support by attending marches, contacting elected officials, and teaching about Palestine.

After the resolution passed by almost a two-thirds margin, a group of rank-and-file organizers (of which we are a part), involving educators of all grade levels, formed OEA for Palestine to consider next steps. It was clear to us that educators must offer more than official union statements. We must encourage our co-workers and students to think deeply about the humanitarian crises unfolding in the world and the role of the United States and others in creating and sustaining them.

Over about a month of regular meetings, a core group of 10 grew to a network of 50 teachers, and generated the idea of

Oakland High students posted their Palestine solidarity artwork in the hallways.

organizing a teach-in. Knowing that our ability to navigate complex issues with our students is one of educators' greatest strengths, we reasoned that educators could organize a teach-in to apply our labor toward encouraging critical discussion and global political consciousness. Oakland teachers had begun teaching about Palestine long before the teach-in. Oakland educators and students were already participating in marches and protests for a cease-fire. We hoped the teach-in could bring the energy of this activism into our classrooms and encourage more interest in the movement.

OEA has a history of supporting districtwide teach-ins, including a 1999 teach-in about the political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal and the death penalty, one in 2003 about the war on Iraq, and in 2011 about state-imposed austerity measures in education. After extended debate centering around whether a teacher union should "take a side" in global political affairs, the OEA also endorsed the "Oakland to Gaza Teach-In" by a two-thirds majority.

Organizing the Teach-In

The Dec. 6 teach-in had three elements: a collection of curricular resources, a virtual panel of Palestine activists, and guest speakers from the Oakland community invited to speak in person in classrooms. We used social media to spread the word and circulate the resources but mostly relied on the OEA for Palestine network that we had built and other connections we had at school sites. We had one-on-one conversations with colleagues about the seriousness of the crisis and the importance of taking collective action as teachers. As one video created by a teacher organizer encouraging others to participate highlighted, the teach-in would allow us to create "more than a statement. . . . You can give kids an aha moment, or maybe even get one yourself . . . [and give] our students a chance to meaningfully interact with the world."

The resources — organized as a non-exhaustive bank of suggested materials rather than a single curriculum — included everything from read-alouds to art projects to math lessons to critical examinations of the conflict's history. They came from a variety of sources, including the Abolitionist Teaching Network, PBS, Teach Palestine, and UNICEF. In the spirit of liberatory pedagogy, we sought to center voices and stories of Palestinian people. For example, some upper elementary school students read Palestinian artist Malak Mattar's *Sitti's Bird: A Gaza Story* to learn about the reality of war for Gazan children in 2014 and created artwork and writing reflecting on the meaning of "liberation" — libertad — in a Spanish immersion classroom. Meanwhile, one middle school lesson encouraged students to study and discuss the role of art in Palestinian resistance movements. Many teachers also created their own Palestine-related materials, such as one computer science teacher who created a lesson on technology access and restrictions in Palestine and a Spanish teacher who taught a lesson about the Palestinian and Jewish diasporas in Latin America.

The curricular resources we assembled emphasized the complexity of the historical context and the need to present multiple perspectives — including the violent history of antisemitism and its catalyzing role in the Zionist movement. A group of 10th-grade English students, for example, produced voice memos reflecting on their study of excerpts from ABC's 1988 "Nightline in the Holy Land" broadcast (during the first intifada), which presents side-by-side interviews from "everyday" Israelis and Palestinians on how they see the history of the same land. Another example is Samia Shoman's "Independence or Catastrophe? Teaching Palestine Through Multiple Perspectives" (see *Rethinking Schools* Vol. 28, No. 4), which prompts students to analyze both Palestinian and Israeli perspectives on key historical events and culminates in a mock U.N. conference negotiation.

While many teachers, as well as the virtual panelists and community guests, publicly presented their pro-cease-fire stance, the teach-in was focused on providing tools to think through the history of the conflict and analyze the current crisis. The organizers of the teach-in had different opinions on the conflict and the best path toward its resolution, but we shared the conviction that the biased messaging of mainstream curricula (and mainstream media) calls for an urgent correction by educators. Students should know that Palestinians are a people, and their century-long struggle for liberation deserves to be recognized and studied.

The Palestine Curriculum War Raging in Oakland

In the weeks leading up to the teach-in, we found ourselves immersed in the nationwide debate on how — or whether — Palestine should be taught in schools. Many Oakland teachers were already including the assault on Gaza and its history in their lessons. For decades teachers have fought for liberatory pedagogy on the struggles of Black, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, workers, and other oppressed groups. The inclusion of the Palestinian struggle into the curriculum is a crucial component in this ongoing fight, inseparable from young people's freedom to make informed choices. In 2020, the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) School Board recognized that certain fields, including Arab American studies, were at risk of elimination from California's emergent ethnic studies curriculum framework, and therefore voted unanimously to preemptively endorse the uncut curriculum draft (including Arab American studies) and to support the work of the Save California Ethnic Studies Coalition.

On Oct. 31, before the teach-in was planned, OUSD's chief academic officer called on teachers to "support our students in learning about the human tragedy in Gaza and Israel" and sent out resources and sample lesson plans on the Israel-Palestine conflict and the Oct. 7 attack. Unfortunately, there were major gaps in the district's resource list. The district included little information about Israel's bombardment and invasion of Gaza that by then had killed 17,000 Palestinians and displaced 1.8 million. The only reference to this U.S.-backed military campaign was added on Oct. 11 and used loaded media language, such as a timeline noting that 1,200 Israelis "have been killed by Hamas," but that 1,055 Gazans simply "have died." More importantly, the official resources did not represent the more than 100-year-long Palestinian resistance against the destruction of their society by occupation and dispossession, which has taken many forms. None of the provided materials were authored by Palestinians, yet the school district included lesson plans by two Zionist lobbying groups, the Anti-Defamation League, and the Institute for Curriculum Services. The former is well known for insisting that anti-Zionism is antisemitism and the latter for lobbying to remove any mention of Palestinians and Palestine from ethnic studies curricula. Finally, the district did not provide any materials for elementary school classes.

Students at Oakland High made 6,000 cranes for peace, one for each Gazan child killed at the time.

These biases and omissions prompted us to assemble the resource bank to supplement the school district's limited offerings. Educators were encouraged, via union-related chat groups, email lists, and social media, to submit relevant curricular materials that members of OEA for Palestine then reviewed. We also enlisted the support of a few experts from organizations like Teach Palestine. Our supplemental resources — such as a 5th-grade lesson in which students identify violations of Palestinian human rights alongside violations of Mexican migrant workers' rights in California — reflect the needs of a diverse city like Oakland and continue its tradition of activism and resistance to oppression. As the introduction to the resource bank explained, our goal was "to introduce our students to a range of perspectives and equip them with the tools to engage critically, participate in the discourse, and draw their own conclusions."

On Dec. 2, following the announcement of the teach-in, Oakland's superintendent sent an email to all educators and families stating that she was "deeply disappointed" by "the harmful and divisive materials being circulated and promoted as factual." She also dusted off a rarely cited 2004 board resolution with a lengthy list of expectations for teachers tackling controversial topics in class. The school board president escalated the superintendent's "disappointment" by effectively threatening to fire anyone who participated in the teach-in, saying to the press "you can't show up and do whatever you want and not face any consequences." Their intimidation tactics and media strategy made it clear that our district sided with those seeking to suppress Palestinian perspectives in the curriculum.

We noted two types of criticism of the teach-in: Some critics raised concerns about individual resources. We took this critique seriously and viewed the curriculum bank as a living document. Based on feedback from parents and educators, we edited documents and corrected inaccuracies, vague language,

and misquotations, especially anything that ran the risk of being interpreted as antisemitic. But some critics sought to frame Palestinian-centered study as inherently antisemitic and issued statements and threats to prevent the teach-in and to prompt retaliation against participants. Following the Oakland superintendent's email expressing "disappointment" and the board president's threat to punish educators, the Deborah Project, a Zionist law firm, sent every principal in the district a cease and desist letter, stating that teachers do not have the legal right to exercise free speech in the classroom. Then media outlets cherry-picked quotations from the teach-in resources to make it seem as if the lessons and materials underplayed antisemitism or the interests of Jewish people. For example, a Dec. 5 Fox News report falsely claimed that the teach-in resources "don't mention the Holocaust by name," and cited as evidence one quote, "During World War II, many Jewish people were killed and mistreated," taken from a worksheet for upper elementary students.

We vehemently oppose antisemitism. Several of the teach-in organizers are Jewish, even Israeli, and are from Holocaust-surviving families. We also oppose the weaponization of antisemitism against the Palestinians, who are denied human and civil rights and are being murdered by the Israeli military. We reject the idea that critique of political Zionism and of Israel as a de jure Jewish state is antisemitic, as well as the idea that winning Palestinian civil rights would negate the rights of Israeli Jews. In the lead-up to the teach-in, we regularly discussed and reflected on the criticism we were receiving — both to differentiate between legitimate critiques and unsubstantiated attacks and to maintain unity and solidarity against the backlash.

How It Went

Despite the school district's heavy-handed intimidation tactics, nearly 100 teachers across 30+ schools indicated an intent to participate on our registration form, which was circulated a few weeks in advance via school site email listservs, regional site reps' WhatsApp groups, at school site union meetings, and on our Instagram account. Several hundred students viewed the livestream panel. Across the district, students made connections from Oakland to Gaza, as they participated in seminar-style discussions, analyzed data and graphs, folded paper cranes, produced argumentative writing to defend their claims, created multimedia art projects, made audio recordings of their reflections, asked questions of guest speakers, and so much more — all in English, Spanish, and Arabic. Teachers sent photos and reports of their day to the OEA for Palestine group and shared stories at a debriefing meeting following the teach-in, and we posted them on social media. One teacher said that the resources "opened a really impactful discussion in 4th grade about injustice. The students had a lot of questions and connections." Another teacher noted that her students did not get to the art component of the lesson because conversation went on for so long. She noted that students were curious about the Jewish diaspora that led to the creation of Israel, the connections between the anti-colonial struggle of Palestinians and that of Indigenous Americans, and why so many people suffer due to the choices of a few political leaders.

Teacher reading *These Olive Trees* by Aya Ghanameh to 1st graders in East Oakland during the teach-in.

Secondary students were similarly engaged during the virtual panel, which included speakers from the Palestinian Youth Movement, Jewish Voice for Peace Bay Area, and the Black Alliance for Peace, and was moderated by an Oakland parent. Panelists spoke about their personal relationship to the Palestinian struggle for freedom, why it is important to them, and how it connects to issues students face in Oakland and the Bay Area. A Palestinian American panelist shared that "for me, being engaged in the Palestinian freedom struggle means rejecting . . . the separation of my land and my people that has been forced on me because of the massacres my grandparents faced." And a Jewish panelist shared that to him, engaging with the Palestinian freedom struggle means "rejecting Zionism's attempt to say that the only way Jewish people can be safe is through . . . militarized violence."

Students then asked the panelists further questions, which showed high levels of engagement and curiosity: "How can we educate our peers about the matter without overwhelming them?"

"How can we help or get involved in the Palestinian struggle?" and "Are people in Israel protesting against the war?"

While a few parents expressed disapproval of the teach-in, stating that it would be too "divisive" or "too complex" for children, many Oakland students, parents, and community members reached out via email to express gratitude for the teachers who participated. With their permission, we shared snippets from their messages on our Instagram. One parent wrote:

> As an Arab Muslim who was born and raised in Oakland, I experienced the aftermath of 9/11 as a 3rd grader, enduring negative treatment from both teachers and peers, and bullying during my middle school years. Now, as a parent with two children in OUSD schools, I am disheartened to learn that my son has been facing similar challenges. . . . As I review the resources provided, I am overcome with emotion. I am immensely proud of your courage, true leadership, and advocacy for the voiceless. . . . Thank you for your unwavering commitment and for being a beacon of hope in our community.

The day was not without its challenges, but it was an earnest attempt to bring the history, joy, and love to the Palestinian people and their struggle for freedom into our classrooms and students' minds and hearts.

Looking Forward

In the face of attacks and threats, we recognized that our safety as activists is not guaranteed (especially for non-tenured teachers). Nevertheless, it is our responsibility to reject the normalization of oppression. In the context of recent opposition to ethnic studies and liberatory pedagogy, the hostility we faced to the very idea of teaching about Palestinian struggle attests to the necessity of this teach-in. When facing such pressure, we sought to avoid pointless confrontations and remain open to genuine communication with critics, while reflecting on our own practice. Though we have received no reports of teachers and staff receiving official retaliation for participating in the teach-in, the district currently faces allegations of discrimination and antisemitism from Zionist parents and organizations. The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights is investigating a complaint against OUSD alleging that the teach-in "discriminated against students on the basis of national origin (shared Jewish ancestry)."

Many teachers were supportive but fearful of being called antisemitic for participating in the teach-in or felt that the issue was "too political" to be appropriate for classrooms. With the current climate of backlash, we understood why our co-workers had these concerns, and it was crucial to engage with them. We facilitated schoolwide meetings and tried to follow up with one-on-one conversations at our schools about what we were doing and why it was important for us to do it.

The teach-in opened possibilities for future organizing, while putting into practice our union's commitment to international solidarity.

We learned that we needed to explicitly state our support for the equal right of Palestinians and Jews to live on the land of Palestine/Israel. That is a necessary step to reach some critics of the teach-in who wrongly but sincerely fear that our support for Palestinian liberation is counterposed to concern for Jewish safety or equates to calling for the expulsion of Jews from the land.

The teach-in opened possibilities for future organizing, strengthening relations between educators and other community and social movement organizers, while putting into practice our union's commitment to international solidarity. We want to connect with and support educators across the country in continuing this effort. We need to help spread and strengthen this work to effectively combat those who are trying to pit Jews against Palestinians to suppress liberatory education. We aim to build on the success of the teach-in and organize further events, bringing more teachers and organizers together in support of Palestine. Organizing this teach-in was transformative. We believe it could be so for other educators who choose to undertake such projects. We hope to hear about more future teach-ins and labor actions that advance the struggle for Palestinian freedom. ●

The authors wish to remain anonymous because Palestine education efforts around the country have been targeted by groups seeking to punish and silence educators. The Oakland Education Association for Palestine Group is made up of rank-and-file teachers in the Oakland Education Association, who came together during Israel's current assault on Gaza to organize support for a cease-fire and Palestinian freedom from occupation. The group includes teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels who come from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds, including several Jewish members. To contact the organizers, email oeaforpalestine@gmail.com.

Photo credits: Oakland Education Association for Palestine Group

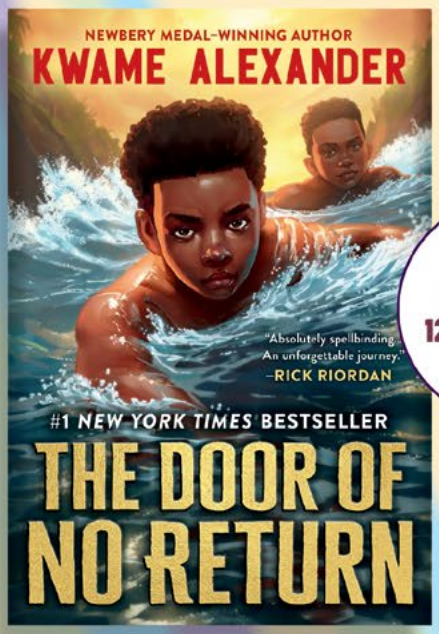
CAN'T MISS LITERATURE

from Little, Brown Books for Young Readers

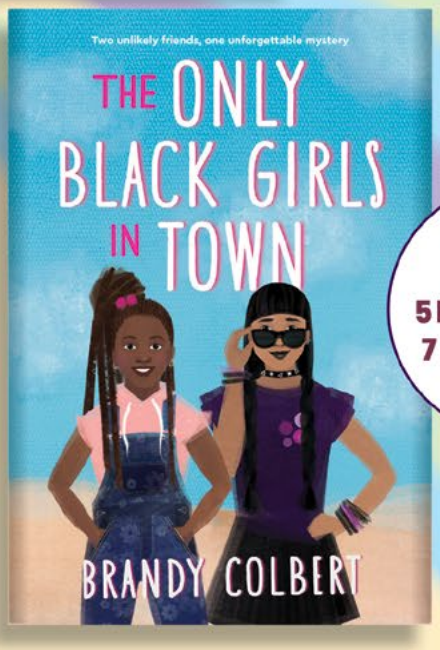
LB

On state awards lists in Florida & Indiana

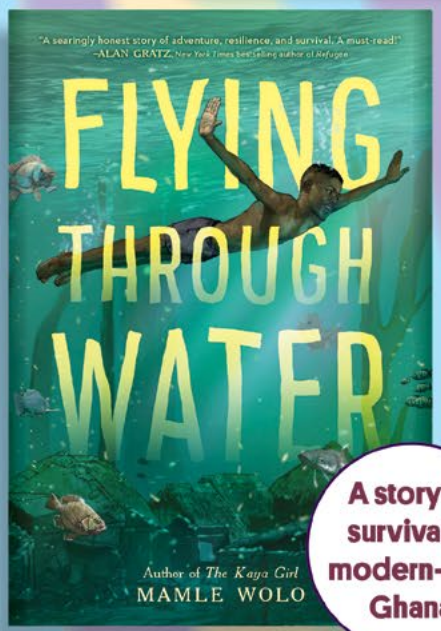
★ "Rich and winning." —*Kirkus*



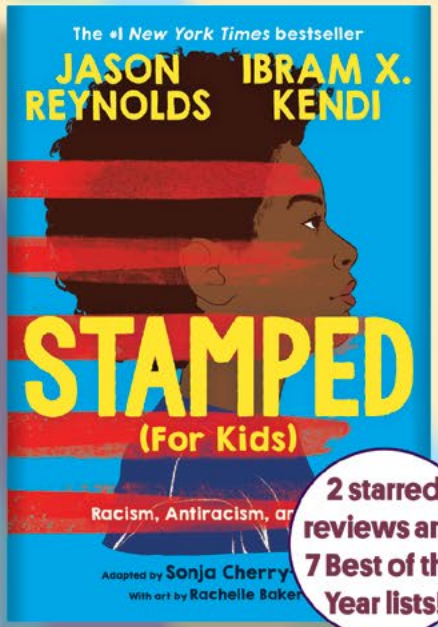
8 starred reviews & 12 Best of the Year lists!



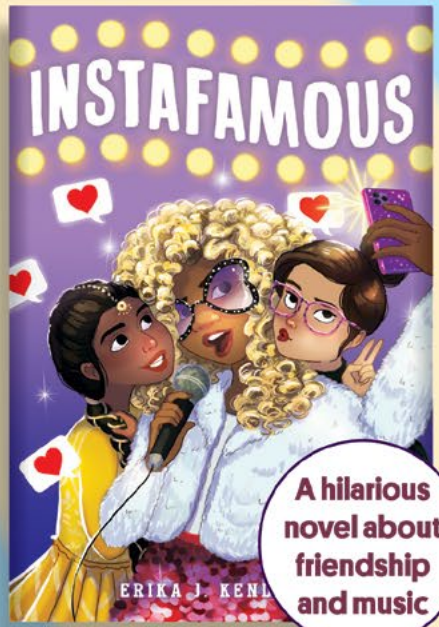
6 starred reviews, 5 Best-of lists & 7 state awards lists!


"A searingly honest story of adventure, resilience, and survival. A must-read!" –ALAN GRATZ, New York Times best-selling author of Refugee
FLYING THROUGH WATER
Author of The Kaya Girl
MAMLE WOLO

A story of survival in modern-day Ghana



2 starred reviews and 7 Best of the Year lists!



A hilarious novel about friendship and music

As a Palestinian, I Often Feel Alone

BY HANA FARES

As a Palestinian going to high school in the United States, I often feel alone. When I see the never-ending bad news about what's happening there, I feel depressed. Sometimes I hide in the bathroom stall and just cry.

I was in a very low place a few weeks ago, so I told one of my closest friends that I was feeling sad because of the Palestinian-Israeli situation. She then asked, "Are you Israeli?" I had told her I was Palestinian before, but she, like so many others, had been taught to think about the violence through the lens of Israeli suffering.

My feelings are usually ignored or overlooked, unlike some of my Israeli classmates'. They are on the "right" side and I am on the "wrong" side. It's hard for me to say I am Palestinian because people don't take it well. I am proud of who I am, yet I am scared of how people will react. The school district hasn't created an environment where I can share who I am or even talk about the situation. The only class I feel accepted for who I am is my Arabic class.

At lunch, I hear a lot of conversations about the conflict. Most of them are talking only about the Israeli side. A schoolmate told me that Palestinians started a war after Hamas attacked Israeli citizens. She said there was no reason behind Hamas' actions. It pains me to hear people totally exclude the Palestinian side of the story.

When I explain the situation to people who have questions about it, they often tell me I'm wrong. One student told me that Israel was a country for longer than Palestine. I told her that Palestine has been there long before modern-day Israel. I searched it and the first 10 sources on the search said that I was correct, but she took my phone and proceeded to find a separate sketchy random source that vaguely said she was right. She was so sure she was right that nothing would convince her otherwise.

I had hoped high school would be better at educating about Palestine. I heard it was a very globally focused school. When the Hamas incident happened, my teachers talked about how horrible it was. I think any loss of human life is terrible. Still, no one made those remarks when the hospital in Gaza was bombed or even mentioned the thousands of Palestinian children killed under the occupation.

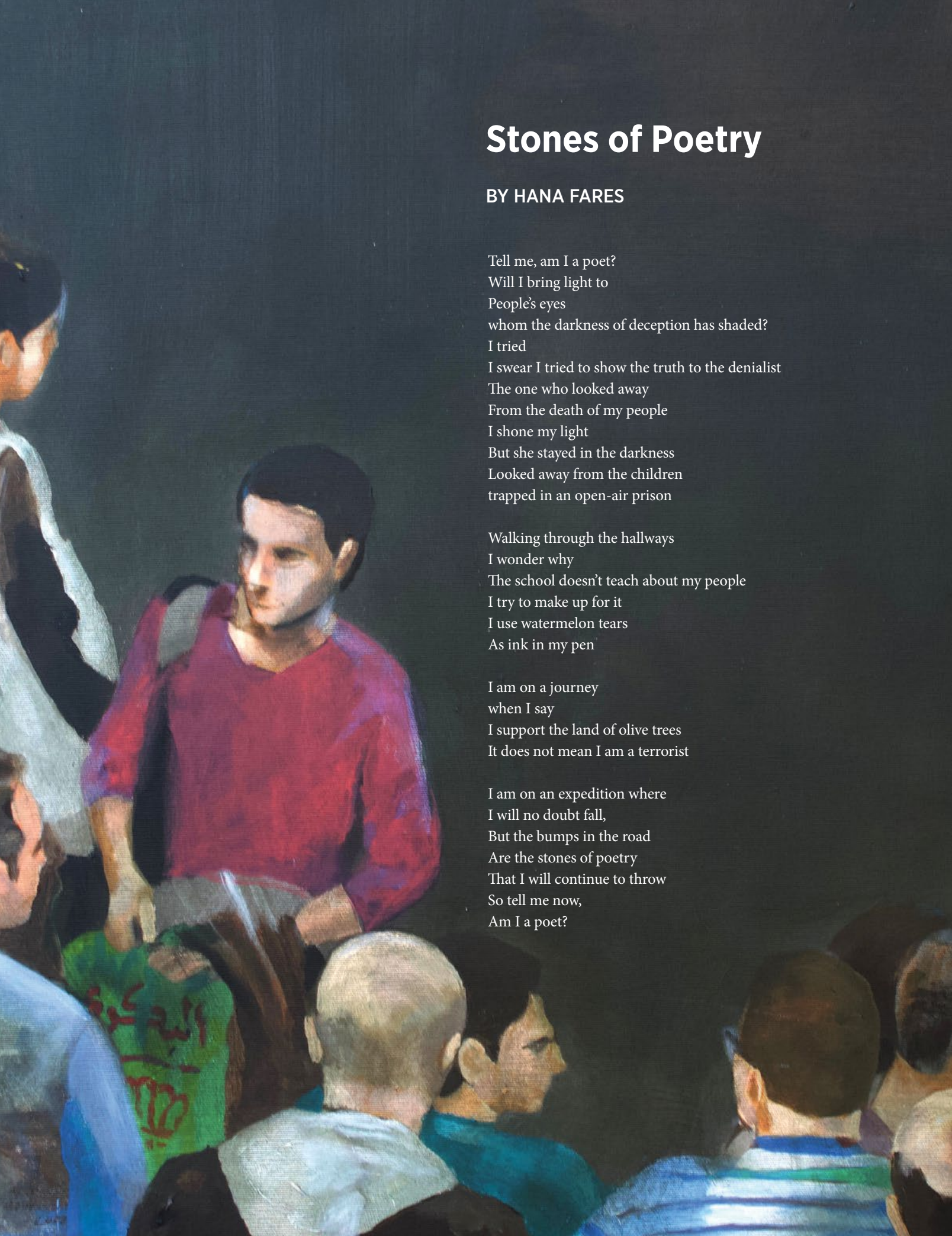
I am scared for my safety. On the side of our house, we had a Palestinian flag. An older man saw it and started yelling at the flag. He screamed lots of horrible things about Palestinians. In another incident, I was on the Max train heading to a protest downtown with my grandmother. I was wearing a keffiyeh and holding a protest sign. A man a few seats down started yelling at us. He called out ugly words so loud the whole train could hear and pointed at us. My grandmother held my hand and said, "Don't say anything."

I hear about the three Palestinian college students shot and the 6-year-old Palestinian boy killed in the United States, and I am scared for my safety. Since wearing a keffiyeh is enough for murder, when I wear mine to school I am on a constant lookout. As a Palestinian student, I feel isolated, judged as untrustworthy, and frequently fear for my safety. Still, I am proud to be Palestinian, and I will keep wearing my keffiyeh with pride. ●

Hana Fares is a teenage Palestinian poet and activist aspiring to influence peace in the Middle East.

Artist Khaled Hourani's art can be seen at instagram.com/khaledhourani6.

KHALED HOURANI



Stones of Poetry

BY HANA FARES

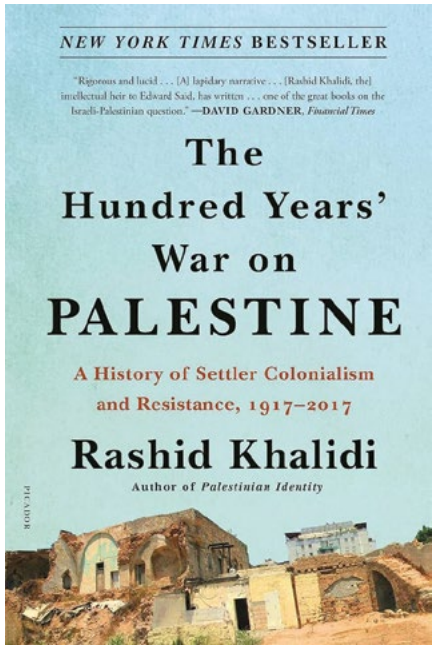
Tell me, am I a poet?
Will I bring light to
People's eyes
whom the darkness of deception has shaded?
I tried
I swear I tried to show the truth to the denialist
The one who looked away
From the death of my people
I shone my light
But she stayed in the darkness
Looked away from the children
trapped in an open-air prison

Walking through the hallways
I wonder why
The school doesn't teach about my people
I try to make up for it
I use watermelon tears
As ink in my pen

I am on a journey
when I say
I support the land of olive trees
It does not mean I am a terrorist

I am on an expedition where
I will no doubt fall,
But the bumps in the road
Are the stones of poetry
That I will continue to throw
So tell me now,
Am I a poet?

Palestine Teaching Resources


NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
"Rigorous and lucid . . . [A] lapidary narrative . . . [Rashid Khalidi, the] intellectual heir to Edward Said, has written . . . one of the great books on the Israeli-Palestinian question." —DAVID GARDNER, Financial Times
The Hundred Years' War on PALESTINE
A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017
Rashid Khalidi
Author of Palestinian Identity

Background Book

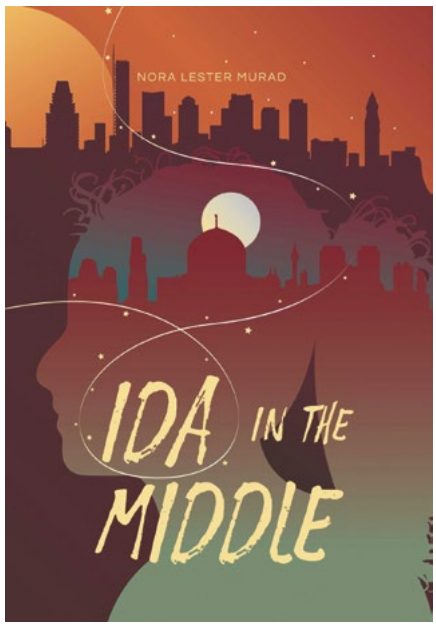
The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017
By Rashid Khalidi
(Picador, 2020)
320 pp.

Every teacher hoping to teach about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should first read Rashid Khalidi's essential *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine.* Khalidi, the Edward Said Professor of Modern Arab Studies at Columbia University, outlines what he sees as the six separate-but-connected wars waged on Palestine between World War I up until shortly before the catastrophe unfolding today. It is scholarly, yet personal, as Khalidi was an eyewitness to a number of these wars. The book begins with Khalidi's great-great-great-uncle, the Palestinian scholar and Ottoman official Yusuf Diya al-Din Pasha al-Khalidi, who wrote to Theodor Herzl, Zionism's founding father, in 1899, stressing that Palestine was not an empty land awaiting Zionist settlement: "It is inhabited by others." He concluded, "In the name of God, let Palestine be left alone." As Khalidi demonstrates, the heart of today's conflicts can be traced back to the original Zionist aspiration of "transforming most of an overwhelmingly Arab country into a predominantly Jewish state." The book's thesis is that "the modern history of Palestine can best be understood in these terms: as a colonial war waged against the indigenous population, by a variety of parties, to force them to relinquish their homeland to another people against their will." Khalidi clearly and compellingly brings this story to life.

Novel

Ida in the Middle
Written by Nora Lester Murad
Illustrated by Kate Cosgrove
(Interlink Publishing, 2022)
223 pp.

Middle school student Ida tries to sit where she is "unnoticeable, like the dust on last year's history books." She seeks to avoid stereotypical insults hurled at her for being from a Palestinian immigrant family. The school's silence aggravates the problem. Ida notes, "Nobody even says the word 'Palestine' in my school. The teachers are afraid to teach anything about the Middle East, even if the topic has nothing to do with politics." As the mother of three girls raised in the West Bank and now living in the United States, author Nora Lester Murad is deeply grounded in the book's characters and themes. And she knows how to captivate middle school readers. Ida eats an olive that sends her time traveling from her home in Massachusetts to her family's home in the West Bank, introducing readers to both the beauty of their village and the violence of the Israeli occupation that eventually forced her family to leave for their safety. This experience gives Ida the courage and conviction to speak in a school assembly about the realities of the occupation, comparing it to what happened to "Indigenous peoples here. How they were pushed off their land and survived so much violence, as if they weren't human." Stepping out of the shadows, she insists that students and teachers see her and her family's humanity.



Films

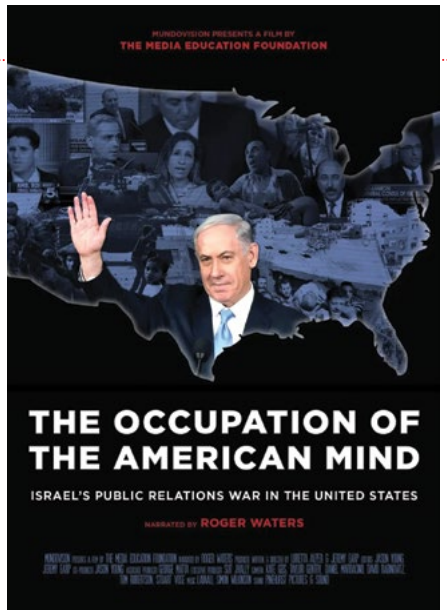
Israelism
Directed by Erin Axelman and Sam Eilertsen
(Tikkun Olam Productions, 2023)
israelismfilm.com
84 min.

"Something is deeply wrong here, and it is breaking my heart. What we've been told is that the only way that Jews can be safe is if Palestinians are not safe. And I guess the more I learned about that, the more I came to see that as a lie." Those are the words of Simone Zimmerman, who grew up in Los Angeles, attended Jewish day school, colored Israeli flags, went to Jewish camps, lived in Israel on a high school exchange program, and even spent time acting the role of an Israeli soldier — and then decided to get answers to her questions about the lives of Palestinians. The heart of the wonderful film *Israelism* is transformation: young

Jews fundamentally changing not just their attitudes about Israel, Palestine, and Palestinians, but about their own role in the world — coming to see themselves as solidarity activists. The filmmakers begin by introducing us to a host of pro-Israel proponents and their arguments: Israel is the place you can go to be safe; Israel is the insurance policy; I cannot separate Judaism and Israel — that is my identity; it's cool to be an Israeli soldier. The film unravels these conclusions and attitudes through the stories of U.S. Jews whose experiences contradict conventional pro-Israeli positions. At almost an hour and a half, *Israelism* is long, but because it is poignant and filled with point-counterpoint storytelling, it makes for a student-friendly film.

The Occupation of the American Mind: Israel's Public Relations War In the United States
Directed by Loretta Alper and Jeremy Earp
(Media Education Foundation, 2016)
occupationmovie.org
(Three versions: 21 min./45 min./84 min.)

Here is Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, depicted in *The Occupation of the American Mind*: "I think Americans largely get it. They know who the good guys are and who the bad guys are." The film's premise is that U.S. attitudes about


THE MEDIA EDUCATION FOUNDATION
THE OCCUPATION OF THE AMERICAN MIND
ISRAEL'S PUBLIC RELATIONS WAR IN THE UNITED STATES
ROGER WATERS

Palestine and Israel have been shaped by a decades-long propaganda campaign that has framed Israel as the victim, the aggrieved — the good guys — and the Palestinians as terrorists, "irrational Muslim fanatics" — the bad guys. As the film points out, pro-Israeli propaganda in the United States requires widespread amnesia — blotting out the history of early Zionist settlement in a land that at the start of the 20th century was 94 percent Palestinian Arab; the 1948 ethnic cleansing of more than 700,000 Palestinians; the 1967 occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza; Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon; and more. Israeli propaganda erases history, and it erases land — as the conflict in Palestine-Israel has always been centered on who will control the land. *The Occupation of the American Mind* helps students recognize how, in the words of Sut Jhally, executive director of the Media Education Foundation, the media and politicians consistently frame "Palestinian resistance as terrorism and Israeli aggression as self-defense." (Helpfully, the filmmakers make available a transcript of the full film: mediaed.org/transcripts/The-Occupation-Of-The-American-Mind-Transcript.pdf.)

Websites

Visualizing Palestine
visualizingpalestine.org
(2024, updated regularly)

Visualizing Palestine is a nonprofit "dedicated to using data and research to visually communicate Palestinian experiences to provoke narrative change." The graphic storytelling at Visualizing Palestine can help students "see" Palestinian reality in new ways, but also prompt students' own imaginative visual projects to story Palestine. For example, one January 2024 illustration depicts school buses lined up into the distance: "It would take 177 buses* to carry the Palestinian children killed by Israeli forces in Gaza. (*72 children per bus.)" Another illustration depicts the disparity in water usage for cooking, hydration, and hygiene:

Israel — 230 liters per person/per day; World Health Organization minimum per person/per day — 100 liters; Gaza, before the war per person/per day — 88; Gaza today — 3 liters per person/per day. Share these and others at the site with students and have them develop their own.

Pali Answers
PaliAnswers.com
2024

Teachers are called upon to be instant experts about the latest world crisis. And usually, we are not. Some of us have studied Palestine-Israel for years, yet some of us have only recently had our hearts touched by what we see in the media, and have committed ourselves to learn more as we teach our students. Needless to say, widespread misinformation — even lies — infect the discourse about the conflict in Gaza and the Occupied Territories, and Israel, so knowing what is true can be a challenge. Pali Answers is a new crowdsourced still-in-process database of short responses designed explicitly to help people contend with anti-Palestine myths. For example: "It all started on Oct. 7." Response: "This kind of historical amnesia and dishonest selective historiography enables Israel to keep breaking international law with impunity. As the U.N. secretary-general said, 'It is important to recognize the attack by Hamas did not happen in a vacuum.' Palestinians have been subjected to over 100 years of war, displacement, occupation, and discrimination by Israel and her imperial backers." Myth: "There was no Nakba, it was the Arab armies that attacked Israel in 1948." Response: "More than 250,000 Palestinians had already been ethnically cleansed out of Palestine before any Arab army had set foot in Palestine. Israel's ethnic cleansing plan was laid out from the 1930s and carried out starting in 1947. Arab armies at no point aimed to destroy Israel, they tried to maintain as much of the territory as possible and prevent an even larger genocide." Tough question from a student? Check out PaliAnswers.com.

PALI ANSWERS
A crowdsourced database of short responses to anti-Palestine talking points
Use this database of social media-ready rebuttals to make countering anti-Palestine bias and misinformation easy

Newscast

Democracy Now! The War and Peace Report
Hosted by Amy Goodman and Juan González
democracynow.org
Monday – Friday, 60 min.

This is the indispensable newscast. For years, the daily, hour-long *Democracy Now!* has featured stories about struggles for racial justice, the impact of climate chaos, student activism around the world — and the ongoing crisis in Palestine-Israel. As horrific and hard-to-watch as the daily news can be, *Democracy Now!* offers a "people's history" focus on the activists who know how tough things are but keep working to make a difference. Recent segments have featured the poignant, eloquent case brought by South Africa accusing Israel of committing genocide in Gaza; a Chicago ER doctor testifying to the viciousness of Israeli attacks on Gaza hospitals, but also to the heroism of those working to keep people alive in impossible conditions; the Palestinian journalist Akram al-Satarri, on what it means to report the news in the Occupied Territories in "The Struggle to Survive, Stay Sane"; Tal Mitnick, the first Israeli jailed for refusing military service in what he calls the "revenge war" on Gaza; and so much more. Bring to life the insights from the film *The Occupation of the American Mind* on the manufacture of propaganda, by asking students to compare, say, *ABC World News Tonight* with *Democracy Now!* — whose voices matter, whose stories get told, what history is explored?

More Teaching Resources

At our Zinn Education Project (zinnedproject.org) — a collaboration of Rethinking Schools and Teaching for Change — we offer a collection of student-friendly resources, including poetry, film recommendations, websites, background articles, and video clips — and lessons and teaching articles, many of which began in the pages of *Rethinking Schools*. One new lesson featured is the mystery/mixer activity "Teaching the Seeds of Violence in Palestine-Israel," about the deep roots of the current crisis, described in "No, Anti-Zionism Is Not Antisemitism," on p. 8 of this issue. Other classroom-tested lessons included are "Independence or Catastrophe? Teaching Palestine Through Multiple Perspectives," "Remembering Mahmoud Darwish," and "A Roadmap to Peace?" — a role play activity on the documentary *Promises*.

Reviewed by Bill Bigelow and Deborah Menkart

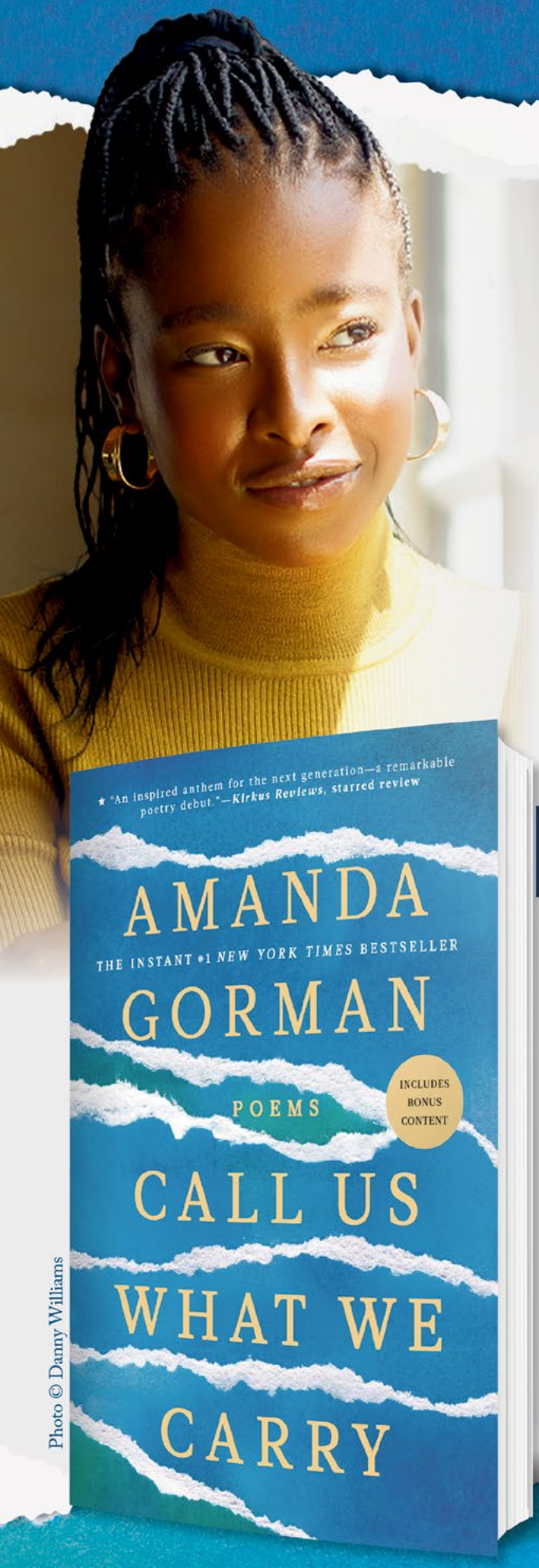

★ "An inspired anthem for the next generation—a remarkable poetry debut."—Kirkus Reviews, starred review
AMANDA
THE INSTANT #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
GORMAN
POEMS
INCLUDES BONUS CONTENT
CALL US WHAT WE CARRY

Photo © Danny Williams

Bring Amanda Gorman's luminous poetry collection about history, language, identity, and erasure

INTO YOUR CLASSROOM

NOW IN PAPERBACK

With a new author Q&A
and discussion questions from

THE EDUCATOR GUIDE WRITTEN BY DISRUPT TEXTS!

READY TO STRIKE
CLASS SIZE MATTER
PAT ON STRIKE
ON STRIKE FOR OUR STUDENTS
ON STRIKE FOR SAFE SCHOOLS
Our children can't wait!
OUR CHILDREN CAN'T WAIT
HOT, COLD RODENTS MOLD
THIS IS GETTING REALLY OLD!
PAT DEMANDS GREAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR ALL
ON STRIKE FOR OUR STUDENTS
PORTLAND ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS
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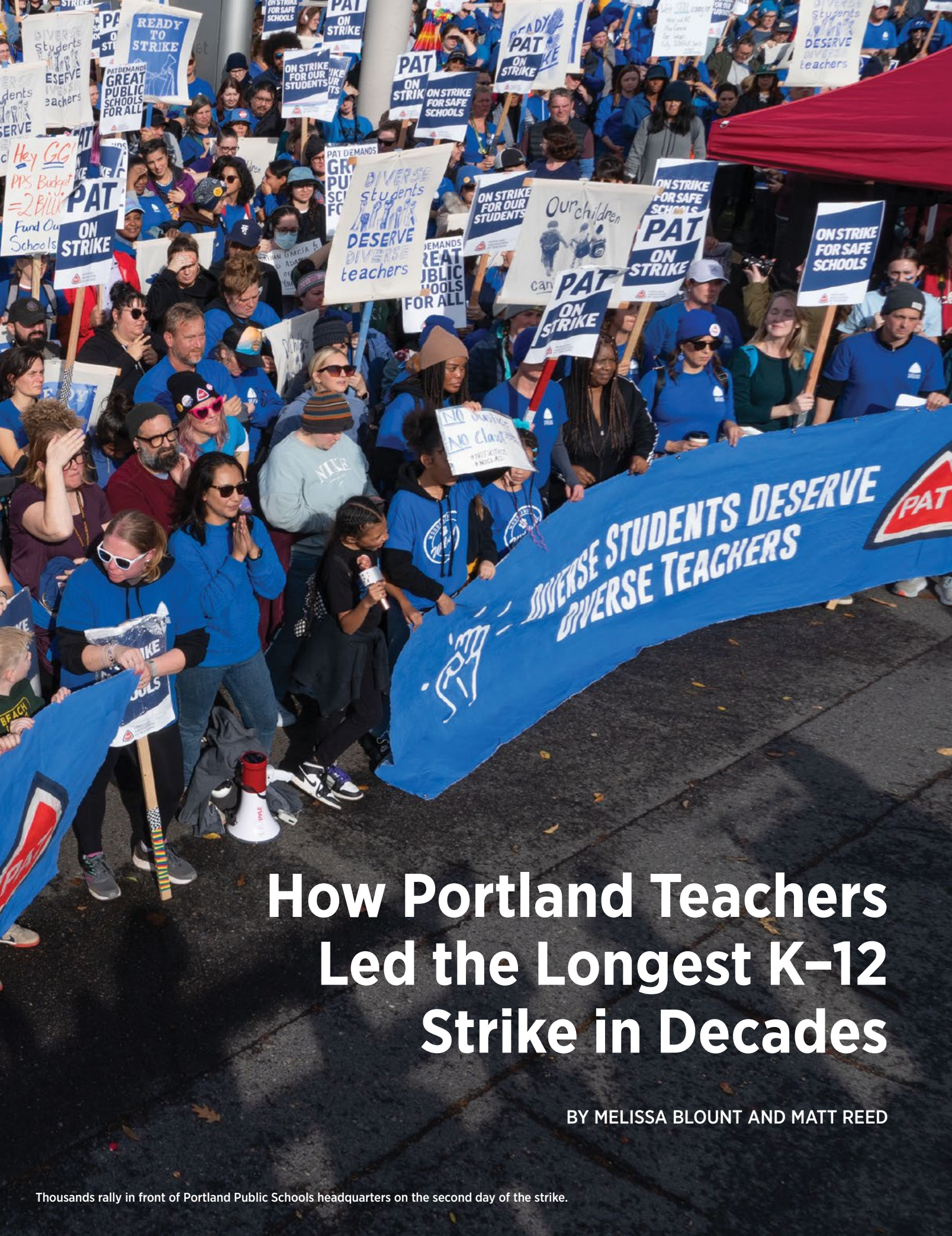
JOE BRUSKY


READY TO STRIKE
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PAT DEMANDS GREAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR ALL
DIVERSE Students DESERVE DIVERSE teachers
Our children
Hey GG PPS Budget =2 BILL Fund Our Schools
NO CLASS
DIVERSE STUDENTS DESERVE DIVERSE TEACHERS
PAT

How Portland Teachers Led the Longest K–12 Strike in Decades

BY MELISSA BLOUNT AND MATT REED

Thousands rally in front of Portland Public Schools headquarters on the second day of the strike.

We'll never forget the day when we knew that we would win. It was 8:30 a.m. on Nov. 21, more than three weeks into the first-ever Portland, Oregon, teachers strike. We were rally marshals, tasked with walking ahead of the march to troubleshoot potential issues. Accompanied by the dull hum of a nearby freeway and the caws of seagulls above the Willamette River, we stood on the sidewalk waiting — hoping that a parade of educators would soon join us.

They had every reason not to. As frustration mounted with district leaders and their refusal to address our demands for safe, equitable, and sustainable schools, so did skepticism of our union's strategy. Educators started to openly question our bargaining team. Others felt concerned about the use of civil disobedience. Some worried that if the strike continued, they would lose health care or not meet rent payments. Trying not to let the doubt in colleagues' minds creep into our own, we made ourselves look busy, checking in with the other marshals using our walkie-talkies, rubbing our hands together to stay warm.

Then suddenly, we heard the chants. "Education is a right! That is why we have to fight!" and the call-and-response "Whose schools? Our schools!" building in volume as nearly 3,000 educators and supporters, marching shoulder to shoulder, drew nearer. The crowd finally reached the apex, where together we sat and occupied the six-lane Burnside Bridge, at the peak of morning rush hour, for several minutes of silence. We wanted to send a message to our school leaders that their refusal to budge at the bargaining table not only affects us. It harms our students and our whole city. Looking at the determined faces surrounding us, it was clear that despite doubts, we were not giving up our fight for the schools our students deserve.

Matt Reed (mreed217@gmail.com) teaches at McDaniel High School in Portland, Oregon. He was a lead internal organizer and serves as a Contract Action Team strike captain for the Portland Association of Teachers.

Melissa Blount (melissa.blount@gmail.com) teaches at George Middle School in Portland, Oregon. She is a former building representative and strike captain who currently serves on the Contract Action Team for the Portland Association of Teachers.

Two Visions for Public Education

The seeds of our strike were sown 10 years ago. In the 2013–2014 school year, school district leaders demanded more than 75 concessions, including bigger class sizes, fewer workload protections, and cuts to healthcare benefits. Inspired by the historic 2012 Chicago Teachers Union strike, our union launched the Schools Portland Students Deserve campaign. We built a coalition of educators, students, and community leaders ready to protect public schools. Two days before educators were set to strike, school district leaders caved. Many believed this victory represented the start of a new movement for the 49,000 students and their families that our union of 4,000 educators served. But in the wake of this campaign, our union's organizing infrastructure withered.

Then in 2017, with the hiring of Superintendent Guadalupe Guerrero, school district leaders laid out a vision for how Portland schools should be "re-Imagined." This corporate rebranding campaign, wrapped in the language of diversity, equity, and inclusion, pulled answers from the national corporate education (de)form playbook: blame educators while cutting staff at schools, standardize curriculum, and increase testing. School leaders began hiring more administrators and cutting direct student-support positions, especially special education teachers, school psychologists, and social workers. In the name of equity, school leaders pushed for a standardized curriculum that would keep all students at the same grade level using the same materials at the same time. To ensure the new curriculum was being implemented, elementary school educators were forced to administer more standardized tests and submit weekly lesson plans to administrators.

The pandemic, distance learning, and the rush to return to "normal" intensified this crisis. Many educators reached their breaking point. By late 2021, more than 80 percent said their workload was excessive and more than a quarter were considering quitting. At the end of the 2021–2022 school year, district leaders announced plans to cut more than 96 elementary and middle school teaching positions and more special education positions.

A Commitment to Listening

Educators' frustration led to new union leadership in 2022. Angela Bonilla became president after serving as her building representative and being appointed to the bargaining team the previous year. An Afro-Caribbean Spanish immersion teacher at a high-poverty elementary school, Bonilla ran on a platform of revitalizing the fight for the schools our students deserve through classroom-to-classroom, bottom-up organizing. Bonilla's running mate was Jacque Dixon, a Latina high school English educator — a longtime building rep with deep roots in racial and social justice communities. Dixon brought grassroots connections with local activists and student artists and performers through her work outside of the classroom.

Bonilla and Dixon wanted to rebuild our union's organizing culture by recruiting leaders and using issue fights to organize educators to achieve small wins. One priority was to address grievances raised by special education and mental health educators. For years district leaders brushed off concerns about high workload, chronic understaffing, and mistreatment from managers. Many educators worked through lunches and breaks to meet district and federal special education timelines.

Bonilla, Dixon, and others pulled together an ad hoc special education

JOE BRUSKY

Students, parents, and teachers walk the picket line together.

organizing committee, drawing on leaders across different job classifications. They organized a listening session for special education teachers. Educators across grade levels and classifications shared issues they experienced and identified two fundamental problems: persistent understaffing and a lack of support from district leaders. They set up follow-up meetings around their key issues. This led to a week of action featuring a mass protest at a school board meeting, launching a community coalition, and teachers and community members delivering a "class action grievance" to the special education department.

Our union also began to forge wider and deeper relationships with parents, families, and community organizations. We drew on powerful examples through the Bargaining for the Common Good network, a national group of unions and community organizations that support these kinds of campaigns.

In late summer 2022, the union leadership recruited elementary educators Tiffany Koyama Lane and Sven Gunvalson to lead a renewed "external" organizing effort. A team of organizers from schools across the district mapped the largely disconnected parent and community organizations associated with schools. We hosted a series of community listening sessions at schools where educators and the community felt long ignored.

Shifting from Mobilizing to Organizing

While we worked to expand our relationships with parents and the community, we rebuilt our membership organizing structure.

With negotiations set to begin in January 2023, in October 2022 we distributed a bargaining survey through the internal organizing structure already in place. Using paper surveys allowed organizers to have conversations within each building. It also allowed us to identify which sites had a strong internal structure, which did not, and assess the skills needed in the months ahead.

The survey results, paired with what we learned from parents and community members, led to the creation of our bargaining platform. This vision for transforming schools called for smaller class sizes and caseloads, additional special education services, expanded mental health services, safe and healthy schools, less standardized testing, expanded early learning and preschool, racial equity and restorative justice, and housing assistance for at-risk families.

Between October 2022 and April 2023, our internal organizing team designed a series of escalating actions: wearing PAT Blue on Tuesdays, donning buttons that read "Bargaining Today! Ask me what I'm fighting for," and displaying solidarity posters outside classrooms. Roughly half of our schools had worksite organizing committees. Each action provided opportunities to identify leaders in schools without organizers and develop leaders in those that did. During internal organizing meetings, we charted which schools participated in

the actions and which did not. When a leader in the meeting saw a school where they had relationships not participating, they "adopted" the school, reached out to friends, identified leaders, and recruited them to take part in the next meeting or action. Every meeting, we taught organizing skills like mapping your worksite or answering tough questions.

By early May, there was little progress at the bargaining table. District leaders proposed minimal cost of living adjustments and virtually no improvement on workload or special education staffing. They refused to discuss early childhood education, standardized testing, and housing. They claimed they had no money, citing misleading data about school enrollment and a lack of new state funding.

We decided to hold a mass rally at a school board meeting. More than 600 educators attended, the largest rally our union hosted in years, forcing district leaders to stop the meeting due to fire code restrictions. A week later, more than 200 educators crammed into a small district meeting room to attend the bargaining session. District leaders were visibly shaken; more importantly, educators felt a sense of their own power.

With the school year ending and district leaders refusing to budge, it became clear that only a strike would lead to the contract our community deserved. Drawing on examples from the Chicago Teachers Union and United Teachers Los Angeles, we established a Contract Action Team — fusing internal and external organizing committees and our existing building representative structure. Over summer break and the first months of the 2023–2024 school year, we met frequently to shore up our organizing structure and deepen community support. We recruited additional leaders to our Contract Action Team; made phone calls and visits to schools without strong union participation; hired new experienced organizers; drafted plans for the possibility of a strike; and as the strike neared, hosted a three-day art build where hundreds of educators, their families, and community supporters gathered to create beautiful picket signs, banners, and street parachutes.

A coalition of parents, grandparents, and community supporters started the Portland Strike-Ready Teachers Solidarity Campaign. This coalition recruited supporters who distributed leaflets about our key demands and updates about negotiations to families outside elementary and middle schools. They also organized phone banks and door-knocking to distribute "Great Public Schools for All" lawn signs and organize local business support.

At the end of September, we held a "strike school" — a two-day retreat to prepare for a possible strike. More than 150 educators attended, including every future building "strike captain." We learned how to organize picket lines and talk with the press. During one workshop, NEA organizer Nate Gunderson reminded us that strikes can be messy and that to win we would need to "embrace the chaos." Many educators felt nervous, knowing that we were on the precipice of something our union had never done before, but it was clear that the fruitless negotiations and false promises of future funds needed to end.

Our union published "A Manufactured Crisis," a report that rebutted district leaders' insistence that they could not afford our key demands. Our researchers found that district leaders held more than $100 million that could be spent. Between Oct. 16 and 18, organizers led strike votes in each building. With 93 percent of members participating, 98.9 percent voted to authorize our strike. Three days before our strike was set to begin, more than 4,000 educators and community members led a March for Our Students and Great Public Schools, filling the Burnside Bridge in downtown Portland.

The day before the strike, educators across the district organized walkouts, chanting "For our students! For our schools! For our community!"

JOE BRUSKY

Portland teachers on the picket line.

Embracing the Chaos

On Nov. 1, educators built picket lines at more than 90 worksites. In the lead-up to the strike, we encouraged educators to think of picket lines as community potlucks — places that welcomed students, families, and supporters and allowed us to educate the community about our key issues. We wanted strike captains to organize picket lines that made the most sense for the community they worked in. Picket lines became mini teach-ins led by students and teachers about conditions in schools. They became dance parties, where educators learned the hidden DJ talents of co-workers. The entrances of schools became art galleries, featuring student creations about what they believed great public schools should be. Some high school picket lines turned into student-led marches distributing "I Love Portland Teachers" window hangs and stickers. Maybe most importantly, picket lines became places to rebuild relationships lost or frayed by the pandemic and the crushing workload. Educators at nearly every picket line commented on how they felt like this was the first time they got to know one another and

rekindle relationships with colleagues. A common refrain on the picket line was "This is the best PD I've had in years!"

In addition to encouraging creativity and joy on our picket lines, we organized three consecutive days of citywide rallies. Thousands of educators and supporters rallied at high schools, at school district headquarters, and at City Hall. In the pouring rain we chanted "Rain or Shine, We Walk the Line," "Beep Beep, Toot Toot, Get Up Off of That Loot," and "Rats, Mold, Hot, Cold, This Is Getting Really Old!" Lawns, businesses, and cars displayed signs of support. Dozens of businesses offered striking teachers meal and drink discounts. Parents, PTAs, and community supporters flooded district leaders with thousands of emails and phone calls urging them to meet our demands. State lawmakers called on school leaders to stop hiding behind claims that they did not have enough money, urging them to meet teachers' demands.

Fear, Uncertainty, Doubt, Division

We hoped that a powerful showing of educators and community support in the first days of the strike would force district leaders to cave to our demands. However, they instead dug in, opening the door to fear, uncertainty, doubt, and division. The biggest question was whether the district had the money to meet our demands. Despite our union's research and the findings of Oregon's chief financial officer that school leaders had more than $12 million more to spend for just the next fiscal year, district leaders continued to claim they had no additional money.

Local media ran anti-educator editorials that tried to poke holes in our demands. Many rank-and-file educators also began questioning our tactics. This came to a head after our union held a rally and march inside the Oregon Convention Center, where one school board leader was in daylong meetings. District leaders described our union's actions as "violent" and "terrorist," threatening to file an unfair labor practice (which they never did). Press about the event picked up district leaders' false narrative. The combination of a lack of progress at the bargaining table and the negative press put stress on educators. Strike captains and member leaders quickly pivoted from the highs of the first week of our strike to answering tough questions about our tactics and plan to win. Educators worried about their next paycheck. And district leaders spread rumors that they would cut our health insurance if we did not return to work before Thanksgiving.

But rank-and-file leaders showed incredible resilience. Educators organized daily regional rallies so those at smaller schools felt buoyed. They organized neighborhood jogs in between morning pickets and afternoon rallies to boost camaraderie. Bargaining team members visited sites to share updates. Students and parents hosted pancake breakfasts and talent shows. Most buildings organized strike resilience funds to help educators pinched by rent and mortgage payments and ongoing medical bills. We adopted an old union chant: "One Day Longer, One Day Stronger." Daily sign-ins to our picket lines by educators remained steady and the number of community supporter sign-ins continued to grow.

Squeezing Water Out of a Rock

After three weeks on strike, there was growing optimism that a settlement was in reach. The last sticking points were class sizes and cost of living raises, the main issues for most educators. Inflation over the previous three years had eroded salaries, meaning that most educators lost an average of $12,000. As housing costs skyrocketed, stagnant pay made it hard to recruit and retain educators. A 2023 study found that Portland was the second least affordable city for new educators. But district leaders kept proposing salary increases that did not keep up with inflation. Class size caps was another key demand. Earlier contracts set a precedent to pay bonuses to educators with overloaded classes in elementary schools or large overall student numbers in middle and high schools. The thinking at the time was that school leaders would keep class sizes and workloads low and hire more educators to avoid "overage" payments. Instead, district leaders

JOE BRUSKY

PAT President Angela Bonilla, NEA President Becky Pringle, and PAT Vice President Jacque Dixon celebrate at a strike rally.

continued to cut teaching positions and overload classrooms.

This time, after three weeks on strike, it seemed like school leaders were finally open to real class size caps, but there was a catch. The caps they would agree to were significantly higher than the softer limits with "overage" payments established in previous contracts. And to win them, educators would have to accept a significantly lower cost of living adjustment and drop our proposal to expand mental health crisis teams. At a standing room only meeting, Angela Bonilla described to building representatives the hard choices we faced: "Right now, negotiations are like squeezing water from a rock. We've put as much pressure as we can on these leaders to do the right thing. But they are refusing to budge."

We continued to hold the line. On day 13 of our strike, parents and grandparents of students occupied the Multnomah County headquarters, where one school board member worked, while educators rallied outside. On day 14, more than 3,000 educators and supporters marched again over the Burnside Bridge. And on day 15 we surrounded City Hall, singing a reworked version of the Ramones' "Blitzkrieg Bop," with the refrain: "We're feeling upbeat, we won't stop! Hey, ho, let's go!"

What We Did, and Didn't, Win

On Sunday, Nov. 26, after holding the line for 15 working days and 26 calendar days, our bargaining team reached an agreement with school leaders. Described by our bargaining team as a "watershed moment for Portland students, families, and educators," we secured wins on key priorities. School leaders agreed to a 13.75 percent cost of living adjustment over three years, the largest increase in our union's history. We increased special education and mental health supports, including adding back mental health positions previously cut. Elementary and middle school educators won more than 90 more minutes per week of planning time, and high school educators won additional planning and grading days. We also won novel building safety language that, for the first time, forces school leaders to act when a classroom is below 60 degrees or above 80 degrees, and when rodents or mold are present.

The same is true for class size. Although we did not win hard class size caps, we did win the creation of committees that, when a classroom or educators' class sizes hit the "overage" threshold, require school leaders to meet with educators and parents to discuss class sizes in schools. We also won expanded academic freedom, including less instructional time spent on standardized testing, and commitments to improve early childhood education and housing support for families.

And yet, many educators are disappointed. We did not win the clear victory on class size caps that seemed so close. Nor did we win enough mental health positions given the ongoing crisis in our schools. And the wins we made are largely deferred. It'll take months before new special education and mental health resources become available. It'll take a year for the increased planning time to take effect. Even our wage increases will take time to be fully felt.

Still, the day after the strike ended, Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek, who largely stayed on the sidelines of our fight, announced new task forces to address the issues we raised, especially mental health and building conditions. Two weeks after our strike ended, Superintendent Guadalupe Guerrero and his chief of staff resigned. Our fight is nowhere near over. In February, school leaders announced a wave of staffing cuts and implying what we won is to blame. It's too soon to know if these proposed cuts will become real, but real or not, they are not new. School leaders lament budget shortfalls and threaten cuts every few years. What is new is that more educators are now participating in our union, readying for another round of state legislative negotiations, discussing ways they can sustain the community coalition built through the strike, and of course, fighting back against this latest round of harmful cuts. It will be up to all of us to digest the lessons of our three weeks on the picket line to rebuild our sense of unity and power. It will be up to us to keep fighting, with our community, for the schools Portland students deserve. ●

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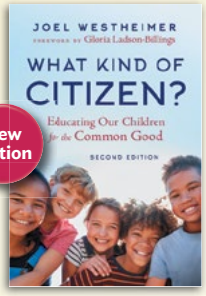

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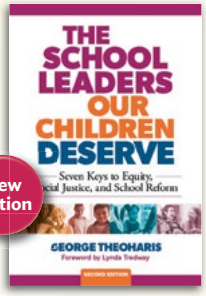

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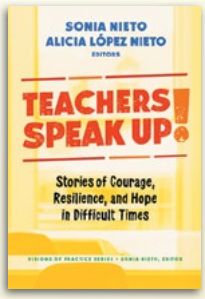

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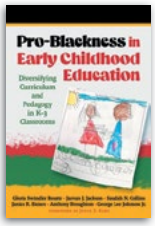

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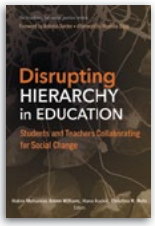

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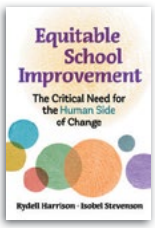

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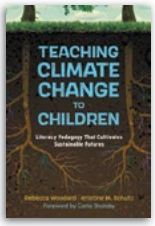

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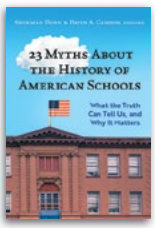

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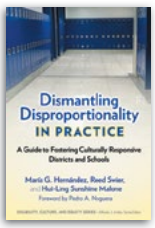

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Teaching Dance for Transformation

"5, 6, 7, 8!" "Do it again." "Tuck in your tailbone. Point your feet!" "It has to be perfect." "Again, again, again."

BY CIERRA KALER-JONES

Cierra Kaler-Jones (cierra@rethinkingschools.org) is the executive director of Rethinking Schools. Cierra is a teacher, dancer, writer, and researcher. She is also on the leadership team of the Zinn Education Project, which Rethinking Schools coordinates with Teaching for Change.

Illustrator Keith Henry Brown's work can be seen at keithhenrybrown.com.

When I first started as a dance teacher years ago, I found myself barking the same commands I heard in my own dance training. The words flowed from my mouth, bounced off the black Marley floor, and reverberated from the mirror-plastered walls. It felt natural — those words — like they had become a rhythm pulsing through my heart and into my pedagogy. The directives were what I knew and what I was used to.

My students at the time, mostly middle and high school-aged Black girls, met me in our community-based dance institute most nights of the week and Saturday mornings, where we honed the technical elements of dance and rehearsed choreography for shows and competitions. At the time, I vigorously demanded perfection from the dancers, as I grappled with tender wounds from years of trying to contort my body to fit a mold instructors and coaches insisted of me.

Historically, the culture of many dance spaces, particularly ballet, can be rigid. While we learn essential lessons about dedication and honing a craft, there are often subtle and not-so-subtle messages we hear that encourage us to police our bodies into unhealthy, false senses of "perfection." A lot of my evolution as a dance teacher has been about unlearning those messages and control as a tool for discipline.

Donning black leotards, skin tone tights, and bare feet, students entered my classroom eager on some days and sluggish from long days at school on others. They also came to the dance classroom with questions, suggestions, fears, and triumphs. While a strict version of myself appeared in the midst of drilling choreography, I tried to maintain practices where I could make connections with students, such as greeting students as they came in the door. I'd offer a soft smile and in a sing-songy voice ask, "How was your day?"

"Ms. Cierra, school was rough today. I'm stressed. Can we meditate?" Ava offered.

"I'm frustrated because we don't really learn any Black history at school. Can we look at Black dance history?" Lani asked.

"Can we use our dancing to make a change? I want to make a statement about the racism I've experienced using dance," Desiree said.

I would nod my head and listen intently, brainstorming ways we could incorporate their ideas in class. In some instances, like Ava's request for meditation, I'd shift the plan for the beginning of class and invite them to find a comfortable position while I led them through guided meditation.

I learned over time that these small touchpoints often yielded critical

KEITH HENRY BROWN

information. Students made important connections and thoughtfully examined their experiences. I learned that once I created space for them to share their wonderings, even within the short time period of a greeting, they began to vocalize what was on their minds. I collected their thoughts and feedback and worked with the director to designate time out of our rehearsals to explore and make space for the dancers' needs. Every week, we carved out an hour to develop our own collective curriculum. I asked them questions like "What's something you'd like to learn as a dancer? What topics are you curious about?" They'd eagerly shout out topics: "using dance for activism," "self-care and taking care of our bodies," "Black history," "improv." At the time, I didn't realize how this effort would lead to a moment that would transform my pedagogy, and in turn, myself.

To be responsive to their ideas, I led an improv segment at the end of one rehearsal. I invited the dancers to spread out and be free in their bodies. "Make sure you have enough space. Close your eyes if that is safe and accessible to you. I'll keep my eyes open and scan the room. Let whatever you feel in your body when the music flows through you happen." I hit play on my lo-fi beats playlist as a smooth melody oozed out of the speaker. I watched as each dancer froze. There were no nervous giggles. Just sheer panic. I hadn't created a space for them to experiment with liberation in their movement. I also hadn't properly scaffolded improv as a skill. I threw my students into the deep end without presenting other opportunities for them to create rather than solely retain. While I made connections with students and asked them what they wanted to learn, the policing nature of my pedagogy stifled opportunities to be creative and explore their artistry. This policing pedagogy often manifested as me shouting commands during rehearsal, rather than engaging in reflection and conversation about how we could individually and collectively work on aspects of the choreography that would lead to our best performance.

I'll never forget the distraught looks and wide eyes that met my gaze. A pit grew in my stomach. I felt my face get hot as the clock ticked to the hour mark, and it was time to release them to their next rehearsal. I felt stuck at that moment, like when you first jump into a pool and everything goes blurry and hushed.

I got in the car that night with tears uncontrollably visiting my weary eyes. I was furious that I hadn't made the dance classroom a refuge for students to explore movement and imagine freedom as it might manifest in their limbs. The same policing I intensely protested in schools had made a home in my practice. I remembered my childhood self, who flinched every time a dance teacher told me I was doing something wrong or I couldn't maneuver my body to look the same way as my peers. My experience in most dance classrooms was governed by hierarchy. The teacher offered critique and feedback, and we applied it. I learned to trust others with my body rather than to identify what my body felt like during particular movements. I began not to trust my body, often pushing myself beyond my limits. I knew I had to change my approach.

I was reminded of this pivotal moment of reflection after recently guest-teaching a dance class at a local high school. A friend invited me to teach a contemporary routine and facilitate a conversation about storytelling and expressing emotions through movement.

As I walked in, the dancers beamed grins at me. I scanned the space as one student ran up to me and wrapped her arms around my waist and exclaimed, "Ms. Cierra!" I taught her when she was younger, and then she took a break from dancing. I hadn't seen her in years, but she was one of the first students I taught early in my career. Joy and memories flooded my body — an unexpected reunion!

The dancers were eager to learn and mostly energetic after a full school day. We spread out in the mirrored room with hardwood floors, and I led a gentle stretch to ease our bodies into an across-the-floor combination and short choreography. When it was time to go across the floor, I posed the question "What do you think of when you engage with contemporary dance?" A few shyly raised their hands. "Emotion." "Flowy movement." "Unstructured." "A release."

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I prompted: "My invitation is to go across the floor with your own movement. Do what feels good to you. Show how you best express yourself. No one's watching — this is just for you." Nervous giggles filled the room. I turned on Khalid's song "Better," which melds hard-hitting background beats with a soothing tune. "Ooo, this is my song!" Chandra cheered as she closed her eyes and swayed back and forth. The dancers flowed across the floor, yet I could see some of them looking down, pausing, and even resorting to walking the remainder of the room's length after only a few steps. I watched as some dancers allowed themselves to move freely for the first few beats and then shifted into shrugged shoulders and timid movements that communicated uncertainty.

After they all went, I praised them. "That was beautiful. I could see you putting yourself outside of your comfort zone. That's so important in dance and in life." Then, I offered an opportunity for reflection: "I noticed that some of you may have held back. I could see your body language change after a movement or two. I'd love to talk more about it. Would anyone feel comfortable sharing why?"

One dancer, Kayla, raised her hand, "I never really improv. A lot of what we do at school is always so structured, so there's not much time for creativity or going outside the box."

"Yeah! I mean, all day, we're told 'You can't go to the bathroom,' 'Don't talk unless I call on you.' 'Sit down.' It's like we're not in control of our own bodies," Jada stated.

"I'm just used to teachers giving the choreography or the lecture, whatever it is. Improv is different. It means we have the answers, not someone else," Phoenix said.

After teaching dance for more than a decade, I've seen this scenario many times. Improv is uncomfortable for many of the dance students I've worked with partly because when probed further, students describe how the process of schooling controls them. They have to stand in a straight line in the hall, go to the bathroom only at certain times, and are asked to regurgitate facts for good grades to be deemed "successful" by a rigid standard. The factory model of schooling persists, where educators require students to comply with directions rather than engage in thoughtful critique not only of the world around them but also of the structure of schooling in which they spend their days. When we direct them to vocalize their ideas and emotions only when it is most convenient for the teacher, students learn to mistrust their physical needs and in turn, themselves. This permeates into the dance classroom.

Punitive logic is not just something that lies only within the police who patrol school hallways.

Punitive logic is not just something that lies only within the police who patrol school hallways. Rather, police is a verb — something we must work to disrupt and dismantle in our practices and our pedagogy. While my original orientation was to dictate commands — remnants of what and how I'd been taught — I learned that I didn't have to perpetuate those practices. I could create a new culture and adopt a new approach. As abolitionist organizer Mariame Kaba states, "When we set out trying to transform society, we must remember that we ourselves will also need to transform." I don't always get it right, and I've also had to learn that I have to extend grace to and not police myself in the process.

There is great power in teaching and modeling discipline and learning how to hold ourselves lovingly accountable that doesn't rely on control and punishment. For instance, in dance, we do this by training, showing up to class, observing strengths and working to improve growth areas, taking care of ourselves, learning choreography, asking questions about the movement to get to clarity, pouring emotions into the storyline of a piece, and supporting fellow dancers. This doesn't have to be punitive, where we penalize students for doing a step incorrectly or missing a count. Rather, we can ask questions to lead students to understand who they are as artists, and in turn, humans in this world. For instance, I now find myself encouraging students to reflect "What did that movement feel like in your body? What would help you more fully express that movement? If you did that movement again, what would you like to do the same or differently? What does this piece mean to you? What story are you trying to tell and what character are you portraying in this piece?"

It can be freeing to use classrooms as space for wonder, imagining, and critique. We can provide spaces for students to practice freedom, to find joy and beauty in movement — to express the kind of people they want to be, in the world they want to live in. And, in the words of Robin D. G. Kelley, like a revolution, liberatory pedagogy is a "process that can and must transform us." ●

The Story of the

In 1969, the Young Lords march to Humboldt Park, Chicago.

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Chicago Young Lords for Teachers

BY LILLY CRUZ

In March 2020, at the start of the pandemic lockdown, I found myself tasked with leading at-home learning for my children while their school community created a plan of action for the weeks (turned years) to come. As a born and bred Chicago Boricua (a term with Indigenous Puerto Rican roots that today denotes awareness of our Afro-Indigenous history and deep cultural pride), I didn't have access to stories of Boricua resistance and self-determination until I became an adult, but the crisis provided an opportunity to shift this generational trajectory.

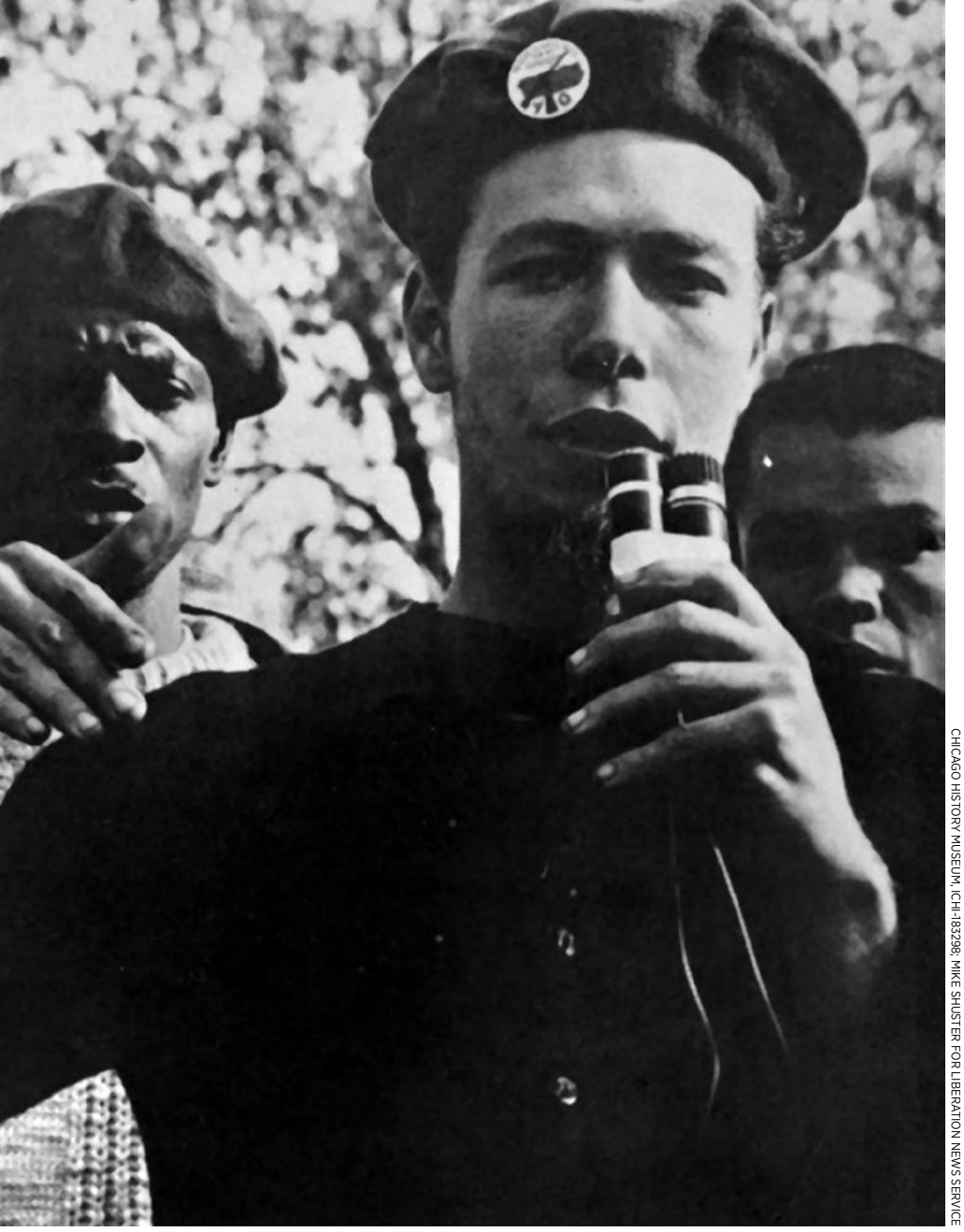
I planned several lessons on Taíno and African resistance movements against Spanish colonizers in Puerto Rico for my children, and chose the Young Lords as a modern account of the Boricua freedom movement.

In the context of burgeoning movements for Black freedom, women's liberation, and against the Vietnam War, José "Cha Cha" Jiménez steered the transformation of the Young Lords in 1968 from a Chicago street gang into a political organization. They organized against displacement, gentrification, structural poverty, and police brutality, and led survival programs that included a children's breakfast program, a health clinic, and a dental clinic. Known as the Puerto Rican counterpart of the Black Panther Party, the Young Lords partnered with Fred Hampton, the Illinois chairman of the Black Panther Party, to form the original Rainbow Coalition, a class-conscious formation that also included poor whites from Appalachia. The Chicago Young Lords' work received national attention in the Black Panther newspaper, and eventually spread to cities throughout the United States, including New York, Milwaukee, and Philadelphia.

As the streets of my city sat eerily empty, I dove into Johanna Fernández' *The Young Lords: A Radical History* (University of North Carolina Press, 2020) to prepare for my daughters' lessons. To my surprise, I found connections to my life in many of the pages. The story of these young revolutionaries with big, bold dreams was closer to my own than I had ever realized. Many of the Young Lords, including Cha Cha, attended Lincoln Park High, the same school I attended. Never once, while hopping on a bus, then a train, and walking on Armitage Avenue to get to my magnet school, did I imagine that Puerto Ricans once lived in Lincoln Park. By the time I was a student there in 1989, the neighborhood had long been gentrified. The work that the Young Lords had led against it had been erased. Not a single Puerto Rican flag was in sight — a hard feat to pull off, as any Boricua can attest!

José "Cha Cha" Jiménez speaking against the Vietnam War and to honor Puerto Rican independence leader Pedro Albizu Campos in Chicago, Oct. 11, 1969.

As I read on to the section on the New York Young Lords in Fernández's book, I found myself returning to the chapter about Chicago. My bias as a Chicagoan surely played a role in this, but it was my astonishment at the Chicago Young Lords' transformation from a street organization to a political group that kept pulling me back. It was different from the formation of the New York Young Lords, who were mostly college educated activists and were political before they followed in the footsteps of the Chicago Young Lords. And then there was the story of Cha Cha and his development as a strategic and internationalist leader. The Chicago Young Lords were unlikely, but fierce, protagonists in the



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history of that era.

Then June 2020 happened.

As I watched protests, mostly led by young people, unfold across Chicago and the rest of the country, I couldn't help but notice the similarities between the story of Manuel Ramos, a Chicago Young Lord murdered by an off-duty Chicago police officer, and the horrific examples of police violence that resulted in the murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. When Black and Latinx gang tension in Chicago came to a head and added another layer of complexity to the uprisings for Black lives, it became even more critical to study and understand the Chicago Young Lords' transformation and the emergence of the original Rainbow Coalition.

In the spirit of *study and struggle*, a '60s freedom movement practice grounded in the necessity to engage political education alongside collective action toward liberation, I reached out to about 20 educators I thought would be interested in discussing *The Young Lords: A Radical History.* I emailed Johanna Fernández, associate professor of history at the City University of New York's Baruch College, who agreed to lead the virtual discussion from New York. Our meeting became a powerful evening of truth-telling, learning, and healing. One person shared how their father joined a street gang to protect themselves from white ethnic gangs just like the Young Lords did in the Lincoln Park neighborhood to which their parents had been displaced. Another educator, a Black man, shared the exhaustion he felt navigating spaces of education disproportionately dominated by white women and how learning about the Young Lords' powerful story and being in the book circle helped him recenter and replenish. While we were learning about Puerto Rican and Mexican youth in '60s Chicago, we were also healing and decolonizing the mind of the young student within us, who rarely saw themself or their authentic stories in school books. As told by Fernández, the Young Lords story opened a window to the often unforgiving historical context within which youth of color came of age in postwar Chicago: migration, deindustrialization, and the struggle to assert their humanity and place in the city in the face of white resentment, violence, and resistance. As we deepened our own political analysis through stories we had never heard before, we also experienced the power of bringing people together for political education. What started as lessons for my children during the pandemic transformed a group of teachers into students of the Young Lords and the broader history of which they were a part.

Gathering Others to Learn and Share

After the first book circle, many of us decided to plan a larger virtual national event about the Young Lords. We wanted to keep the momentum going, continue to read and learn about the Young Lords, and build together. We decided to focus our first event, held in October of 2020, on Cha Cha Jiménez's story — his family's migration from Puerto Rico to the United States and eventually to Chicago in the 1950s; the constant housing displacement imposed on his family by "urban renewal"; the racialized violence at the hands of white ethnic gangs that he and his friends endured as children — violence that prompted the formation

of gangs amongst youth of color for protection and self-defense. Cha Cha's radicalization was catalyzed during time spent in Puerto Rico and a stint in prison, where he read *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and Martin Luther King's *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?*, which helped him develop a critical consciousness about the social issues that shaped him, his family, and his community.

Our event reflected the process we had created as a group: Fernández led a mini-lecture; we played an interview she conducted with Jiménez that focused on his radicalization. We used breakout groups to provide more intimate spaces for folks to process and share. And many of them shared so vulnerably and openly as they made connections to the story of the Chicago Young Lords.

One attendee from a suburb in Seattle said: "For so long I've been the only Puerto Rican in my community. . . . I would share my stories and often it would be a window for people . . . they see right through it and they don't understand. For once, I feel like I'm reflected back. There are so many stories [here] that are mirrors. For once I felt a sense of belonging and community."

Another attendee shared, "This is the first time I've been in community with others who have deeply reflected on the Young Lords and what they meant to them."

One of our younger members read an excerpt from "Puerto Rican Obituary" by Pedro Pietri, poet laureate of the New York Young Lords. The poem tells the story of the Puerto Rican diaspora through five characters in what was a new, avant-garde literary style at the time, spoken word.

They worked
They were always on time
They were never late
They never spoke back
when they were insulted
They worked
They never took days off
that were not on the calendar
They never went on strike
without permission
They worked
ten days a week
and were only paid for five
They worked
They worked
They worked
and they died
They died broke
They died owing
They died never knowing
what the front entrance
of the first national city bank looks like

We ended on a high note with Chicago Black Boricua artist and DJ Sadie Woods, who played a house set during our virtual after-party. The work of organizing such a powerful event and seeing it to fruition sustained us as a group and inspired us to keep gathering with others.

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Summer Camp!

After our second virtual event, which focused on Fred Hampton's leadership in the Chicago Black Panthers and his vision for the Rainbow Coalition, some of the educators in the group started thinking about a Young Lords curriculum for young people. To co-create and test this curriculum, we organized a summer youth camp. We recruited campers aged 12 to 18 through social media and a ton of outreach to educators, colleagues, youth groups, and parents and guardians. We ended up with 18 Black, Latinx, and Asian young people; eight identified as boys and 10 identified as girls. When asked why they applied for the camp, their responses included:

- I want to make a change.
- I want people to see us Puerto Ricans, our POV, & help the world be a better place.
- I feel like there are a lot of things in this world that need fixing. History tells us that young people lead the movements that create the most change. I want to learn about how I can make a contribution to my community.

As we read applicants' responses, we saw the possibility for intergenerational connections and learning. Plus, as we all know, young people will tell you the truth, and we wanted to hear their reactions to the curriculum draft.

Fernández flew to Chicago from New York to lead lessons for the campers that took us from the origins of the Chicago Young Lords to the class-based solidarity of the Rainbow Coalition and even the origins of slavery. The campers heard *testimonios* from Omar López, former minister of information of the Chicago Young Lords, and David Stovall, professor in the Departments of Black Studies and Criminology, Law, and Justice at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Campers engaged in a Bomba dance intensive led by Ivelisse Diaz, directora de La Escuelita Bombera de Corazón, with guest artists Denise Solis and Marien Torres.

Fernández's first lesson began with Cha Cha's migration to Chicago as a child, which she contextualized as part of the mass migrations — from countryside to city — of historically racialized people in the United States during the post-World War II period. The migrations to the cities of Puerto Ricans from Puerto Rico, Black Americans from the South, Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans from the Southwest transformed these populations into a working class and set the stage for the rise of the civil rights and Black, Brown, and even Yellow power movements. After the campers learned more about the pull factors of Puerto Rican migration, they reflected on their own stories of migration. We asked them to write responses to the prompts "Why do people migrate? What is your story of migration? How did your family or your ancestors arrive in Chicago and why?"

Fernández acknowledged that they may not know their story of migration and that is an important truth to share as well. Campers wrote on their own for 15 minutes, and then paired up with partners and shared their stories. After each camper shared their story with their partner, we brought the whole group together and asked students to share the similarities and differences in their stories and in that of Cha Cha's. Throughout the week, campers continued learning about the story of the Chicago Young Lords, alongside post-World War II and '60s history.

As a summative project, the campers chose an issue that mattered to them and we supported their analysis with a root cause protocol. Campers researched their issue using a historical and economic lens. Protocol questions included "When did the problem start? How did the problem show up in the distant past? What does the economy have to do with the problem? How are people of different classes affected?"

Young people will tell you the truth, and we wanted to hear their reactions to the curriculum.

After answering these questions, campers were asked to think about strategy. Guiding criteria included 1. Learn how people have responded in the past and how the system responded to people's demands, and 2. Be clear about what you want, why you want it, and who you want it for.

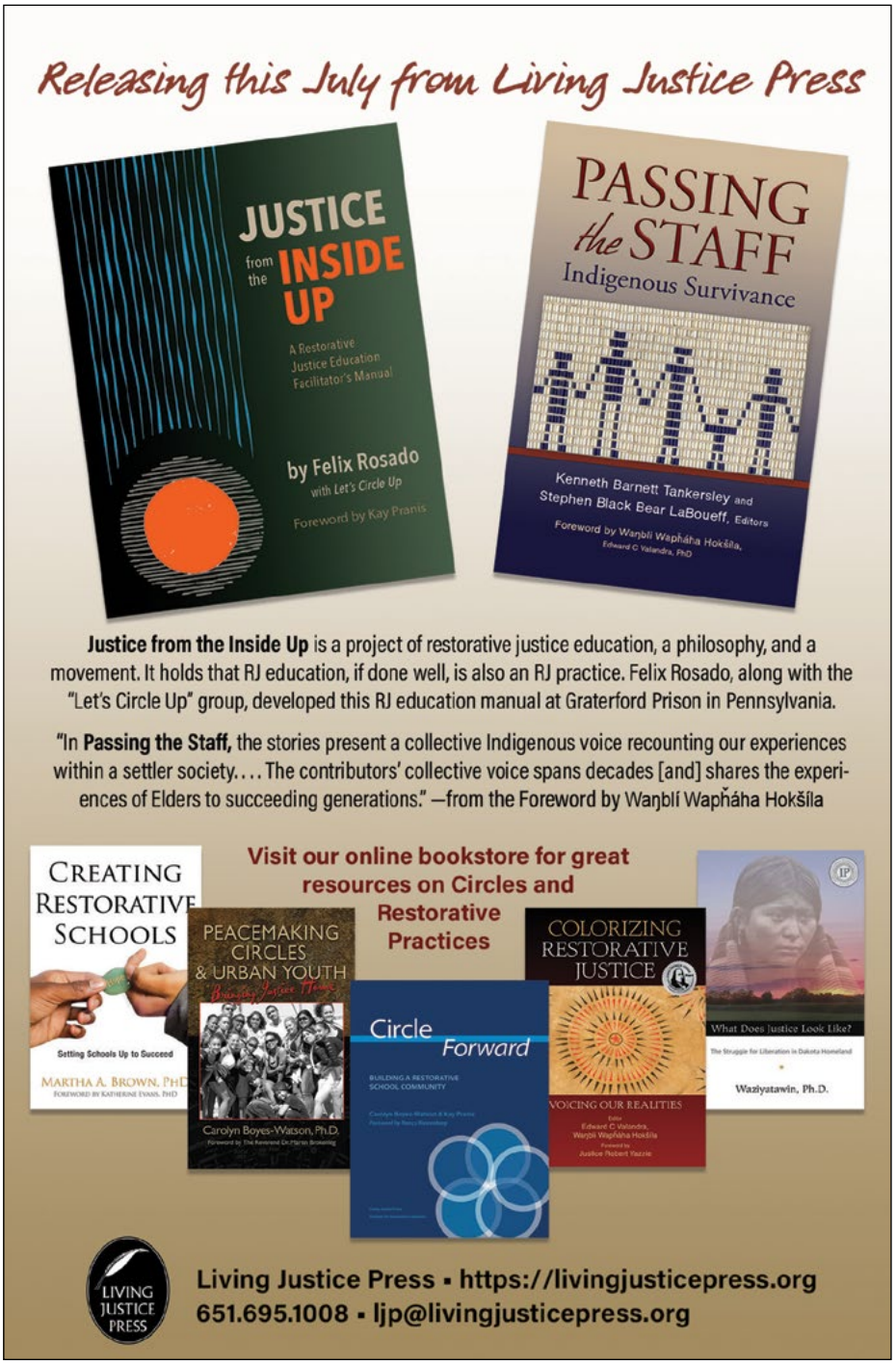
On the last day, the campers presented their "platforms" to the group. Then political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal called and spoke to the students about the significance of his experience in the Black Panther Party. In the afternoon, we brought back Sadie Woods, who shared the story of her *It Was a Rebellion* mixtape and celebrated the students' platform speeches with a custom DJ set.

Students reflected on their experience. "I got to know more of my worth," one camper shared. "I got to know others and their point of view and how to listen to every single word a person has to say about their story because their story can be so big. . . . Listening to the Young Lords' story and the Black Panthers' story, it's a lot and it's so good." Another student committed to taking their experience back to their school and sharing their learning with other

students. Ultimately, this was the goal of the camp — to support the campers' sense of agency and possibility within their lives and communities.

Connect as You Build

Every time we organized an event, we learned something new about the Young Lords and the '60s freedom movement. But it was through the creation of the Young Lords curriculum that we engaged in the nuanced learning that happens when you make time for focused research. One of these moments happened when we asked permission to use Aurora Levins Morales' poem "Child of the Americas," which uses powerful language and imagery to beautifully capture the complexities of Puerto Rican identity. After asking the permissions agent to use the poem in our curriculum, I received an enthusiastic reply from Morales herself. I always thought she was part of the Nuyorican movement of poets in New York, and was shocked when she shared that she lived in Chicago in the 1960s and had heard Fred Hampton speak. Her father taught Puerto Rican history classes to the Chicago Young Lords. She connected me to her brother, social justice artist Ricardo Levins Morales. One of his pieces depicts a Young Lord gardening as part of their People's Park project. In the midst of the forced displacement of Puerto Ricans from Lincoln Park, the Young Lords took over a plot of land in the neighborhood and created a communal space for young people. Through searches for images and conversations with museums and university curators, we were able to locate images of the People's Park and other buried documentation of the Young Lords' organizing.


Releasing this July from Living Justice Press
JUSTICE from the INSIDE UP
A Restorative Justice Education Facilitator's Manual
by Felix Rosado with Let's Circle Up
Foreword by Kay Pranis
PASSING the STAFF
Indigenous Survivance
Kenneth Barnett Tankersley and Stephen Black Bear LaBoueff, Editors
Foreword by Wanbli Wapháha Hokšíla, Edward C Valandra, PhD
Justice from the Inside Up is a project of restorative justice education, a philosophy, and a movement. It holds that RJ education, if done well, is also an RJ practice. Felix Rosado, along with the "Let's Circle Up" group, developed this RJ education manual at Graterford Prison in Pennsylvania.
"In Passing the Staff, the stories present a collective Indigenous voice recounting our experiences within a settler society. . . . The contributors' collective voice spans decades [and] shares the experiences of Elders to succeeding generations." —from the Foreword by Wanblí Wapháha Hokšíla
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Share Early, Share Often

As the research continued and the curriculum writing moved too slowly for my comfort level, a colega urged, "Don't keep your stuff from others." She could tell that I was feeling the pressure to create a polished, finished curriculum. (I still do!) But her words made me realize that, even in its unfinished state, we had something powerful to offer teachers.

In May 2022, a colleague offered to pilot the first unit of the curriculum, which focuses on the origin story of the Young Lords and culminates with students writing counter-narratives, much like the counter-narratives Jiménez and other Young Lords created in their own lives. The next fall, a small group of us organized a two-session workshop for Chicago teachers on the Chicago Young Lords. On the first day, teacher-participants engaged in an inquiry learning process. They explored primary sources, including photos of Young Lord demonstrations and events, articles from the Young Lords' newspaper, and articles about the Young Lords in the mainstream press. Documents were organized by themes, in four centers: 1. Puerto Rican

Migration; 2. Beginnings of the Young Lords' & Cha Cha's Radicalization; 3. The Young Lords' Radicalization; and 4. Community Transformation.

After teacher-participants' curiosities about the Chicago Young Lords were sparked, Omar López, Johanna Fernández, the teacher who piloted the first unit, and two of her students, who were also campers in our summer camp, shared their stories. The father of a member of our group, Edwin Cortés, who was a political prisoner in the United States for supporting Puerto Rican independence, also spoke. We played and discussed the documentary component of Bad Bunny's music video *Apagón*, about the United States' role in displacing Boricuas from our island. Even without a perfectly finished curriculum, teachers shared their excitement and commitment to bringing the Young Lords to their students.

Outside/Inside

From the beginning, our group has functioned outside traditional education spaces. This has provided flexibility and freedom to build and create at our own pace, process, and political perspective. But it has also been important to have allies in the system who support ethnic studies because there is so much power and possibility in a classroom.

For example, we originally tried to host the event at Lincoln Park High School because so many of the Young Lords attended the school and it's vital for the students at the school to know this community history. When that didn't work out, school leaders at Darwin Elementary and Moos Elementary, two community Chicago Public Schools, warmly hosted us. And through one of our connections, the Chicago Public Schools social sciences department distributed our event flier. There will always be challenges working with large systems, but many ethnic studies supporters work within these structures, and all students need to learn ethnic studies content and framing.

Coming Back Home to Ourselves

In her poem "Here," Dominicana and Boricua poet Sandra María Esteves says:

> I may never overcome
> the theft of my isla heritage
> dulce palmas de coco on Luquillo
> sway in windy recesses I can only
> imagine
> and remember how it was
> but that reality now a dream
> teaches me to see, and will
> bring me back to me

Although I grew up in a large, loving Puerto Rican family in which we always spoke Spanish first, made *pasteles*, danced salsa in our living rooms, and enjoyed camping and fishing trips with three generations of relatives, our elders did not share stories of resistance with my cousins and me. There was a time when I felt frustrated about this, even angry. But when I read Cha Cha's realization of his own parents' circumstances as Puerto Rican migrants, it helped me understand why my parents and family were not able to share these stories. They were too busy surviving and adapting to life in Chicago, secretly mourning their beautiful land. In some cases, perhaps they had internalized the racism and colonial mentality that was inflicted on them. So, as I learned more about my history, in the practice of decolonizing my mind, I was healing my heart and feeling deep empathy for and connection with my elders and ancestors. This has been the most profound result of my relationship with ethnic studies.

But you don't have to be a Boricua to understand the historical and present-day impact of colonialism and imperialism through the story of the Young Lords.

> It's not just about Puerto Ricans. It's about Latinos, it's about oppressed people, it's about progressive people, it's about Black Lives Matter today, it's about everything that's going on. It's a connection. It's a protracted struggle. It's called unite the many to defeat the few — that's how we're gonna win.

These powerful words from Cha Cha (quoted in "Once a Street Gang, Then a Political Collective, the Young Lords Celebrate 50 Years with a Symposium at DePaul," by Kerry Cardoza, *Chicago Reader*, Sept. 21, 2018) capture the vision so many young Chicagoans organized and sacrificed for in the '60s, and continue to organize today. Ethnic studies is for all of us, and is about all of us, across the world, not just in Chicago or our country.

In the spirit of Robin D. G. Kelley's *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*, my freedom dream is that we nurture learning and growth in our teachers as much as we nurture growth in our students. Let's create safe spaces that welcome educators with varied levels of political education knowledge. Spaces that allow us to release the shame and blame we carry and inflict, because we understand that we too were robbed of the truth. Let's create spaces where we come together vulnerably, never feel alone in this work, and can count on community care when we need it the most. And let's always remember, together, how our individual knowings are catalysts for young people, so they too can come back to and hold on to themselves. ●

Lilly Cruz (elgriotandareitoproject@gmail.com) is a Chicago Boricua, social justice educator, and founder of El Griot & Areito Project. The Chicago YLO curriculum can be found at teachingthechicagoylo.net.

Why I Teach *Look for Me in the Whirlwind*

FROM THE PANTHER 21 TO 21ST-CENTURY REVOLUTIONS
LOOK FOR ME IN THE WHIRLWIND
THE BLACK PANTHER
Including The Collective Autobiography of the New York 21 (1971) with New Commentary by Sekou Odinga, Dhoruba Bin Wahad, Shaba Om, and Jamal Joseph
Edited by déqui kioni-sadiki and Matt Meyer
Foreword by Imam Jamil Al-Amin (formerly H. Rap Brown)
Afterword by Mumia Abu-Jamal

BY T. J. WHITAKER

T. J. Whitaker (teachertwhit@gmail.com) teaches English/language arts and AP African American studies at Columbia High School in Maplewood, New Jersey. He is also a co-founder of MapSO Freedom School, a nonprofit teacher collective that provides racial justice education for educators, parents, and community members.

> What makes *Look for Me in the Whirlwind* still current today is that a lot of the same political issues that existed then are relevant even now. As you go through the book and read the various sections, if you overlook the date you won't be able to tell whether you're reading about the 1960s or reading about today.
>
> —Shaba Om, *Look for Me in the Whirlwind*

Shaba Om's quote from the introduction summarizes why I teach the history of the Panther 21 using *Look for Me in the Whirlwind: From the Panther 21 to 21st-Century Revolutions*. While many histories of the Black Panther Party focus on the Oakland chapter, the New York chapter was one of the largest and most active. In an attempt to disrupt the rapid growth of Black Panther organization in 1969, the FBI and the New York City Police Department arrested and charged 21 New York Black Panther members with conspiracy to commit violent acts. The Panther 21 trial revealed illegal government activities and that police infiltrators had played key organizing roles and led to the acquittal of the 21 in 1971.

I teach an 11th- and 12th-grade honors level course titled Literature and Social Criticism at Columbia High School in Maplewood, New Jersey, a school with more than 2,000 students and a district that prides itself on diversity, but is not without challenges in serving students of color, particularly Black students. Teaching the Panther 21 enables me to address Black Power activists' work as community organizers, their belief in self-defense (not random violence), and the illegal repression mounted by the U.S. government to "neutralize" them. I teach Black Panther history through literature to counter the "Good Civil Rights Movement" vs. "Bad Black Power Movement" narrative that still exists in too many classrooms: the Civil Rights Movement was good because it was nonviolent, and the Black Power Movement was bad because it supported violence. I seek resources that allow individuals to speak for themselves, without misleading interpretation.

The updated edition of *Look for Me in the Whirlwind: From the Panther 21 to 21st-Century Revolutions* is an excellent source of engaging essays, poetry, photographs, and literary representations by the New York Panther 21 and other revolutionary voices from the Black Freedom Movement. Like the original *Look for Me in the Whirlwind* published in 1971, the book includes the collective autobiography drawn from Panther 21 defendants' personal reflections, broken up into 11 sections. The themes include family, community, education, Black culture, racism, and resistance. The entries range from a single paragraph to a couple of pages. The updated version

includes new commentary by original Panther 21 defendants Sekou Odinga, Dhoruba Bin Wahad, Shaba Om, and Jamal Joseph. With a foreword by Imam Jalil Al-Amin (formerly H. Rap Brown), an afterword by Mumia Abu-Jamal, newly discovered or rarely seen Panther 21 poetry by Afeni Shakur and Sundiata Acoli, and past and present photos, the book provides a plethora of text and visual resources to use with students.

In my Literature and Social Criticism course, students and I engage with *Look for Me in the Whirlwind* through seminar discussions. First, I ask students to read and review the initial entry of all the defendants. After reviewing the entries, students choose three individuals they would like to follow throughout the reading. Then I assign each student one of their three choices. Students follow their assigned Panther 21 defendant throughout the biographical section of the book and explore that person's reactions during class discussions. During the seminar, students present that person's story in class with text quotes and analysis, discussion questions, and commentary about the connections they see between the past and present.

Look for Me in the Whirlwind exposes the impact of white supremacy on Panther members coming of age as young people in America, the experiences of interpersonal and institutional racism that ultimately led to their attempts to bring about social and political change in their communities. For example, Kwando Kinshasa writes about his coming to critical awareness while driving across the country with his father:

> In 1955 I drove from New York to California with my father. My father made sure I saw the conditions of the red men who lived in the prisons that white people called reservations. . . . [P]eople pay admission to see other people struggling to live — all part of the tourist "see America" trip. I saw America all right. I saw a lot of hotels and motels we were not allowed to stay the night in. I saw racism in every state we passed through. I became painfully aware that somehow or other I had to learn more about what really goes down in this world.

By reading the autobiographical entries like Kinshasa's, students learn that people are not born organizers, activists, and revolutionaries. Most often, they are ordinary people from hardworking families who develop a sociopolitical consciousness based on their experiences and interactions with others.

The Panther 21 reflections on their personal educational experiences deeply resonate with my students. Baba Sekou Odinga, who passed away this January, was a member of Malcolm X's Organization of Afro-American Unity, and a founding member of the New York chapter of the Black Panther Party as well as the Black Panther International Section. In Part 3 of *Look for Me in the Whirlwind,* Odinga writes, "School was not a pleasant place for me. . . . I found most of the teachers to be a bunch of sadistic, pusillanimous, misunderstanding, unsympathetic, unprincipled jive motherfuckers toward children whose parents they considered to be from a totally different class." When Odinga goes to live with his mother in Antigua at 12 years old, he has his first positive experience with a teacher. He recalls,

> . . . my teacher was more than just "a teacher" — he was a humanistic teacher, a Black man who was concerned with the education of Black children, a teacher in the fullest sense of the word. His name was Mr. Lindsay. . . . Sometimes when we were reading something as a class he told us that some of the things in the books were not meant to educate us to the true value of our selves — that they were meant to give us a sense of inferiority.

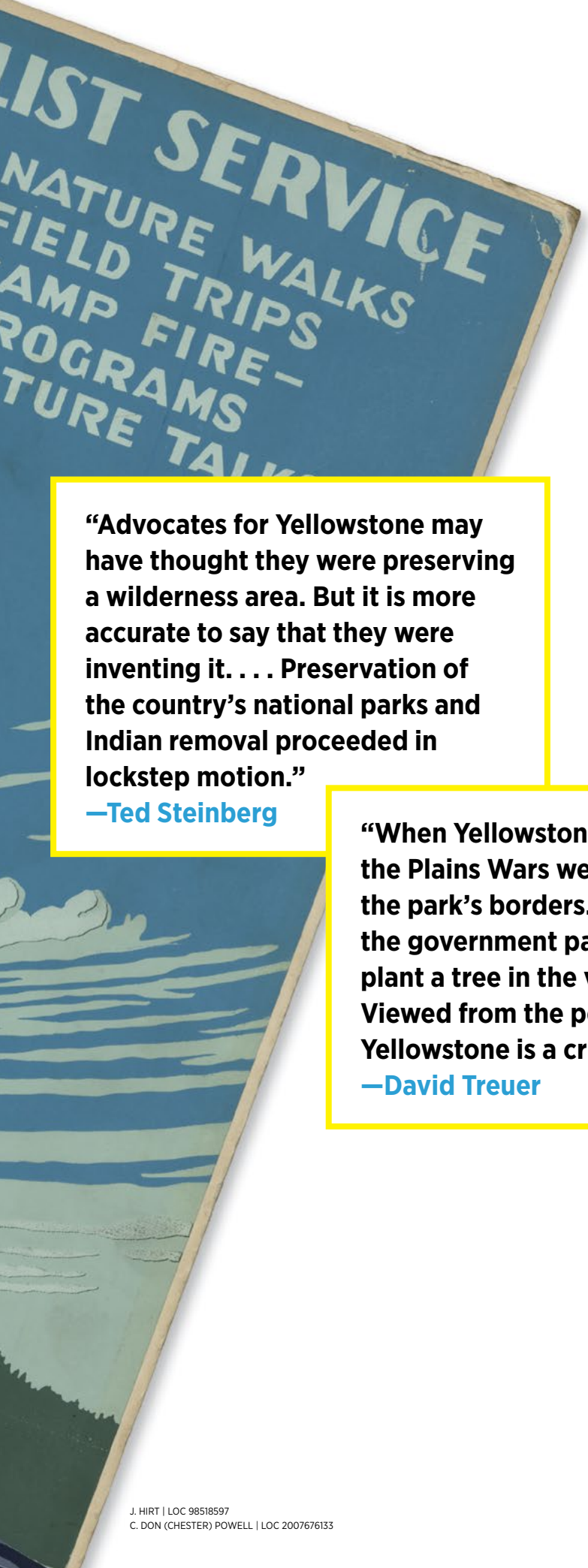
My student, Maddy M, responded to Odinga's entry:

> This is oftentimes an issue when it comes to history textbooks. They always only tell one side of the story — often the white side. They paint these tragedies as white people saving POC or minorities when most of the time it is the opposite. The main issue is that these books are always written by white people who want to paint things in this way instead of by POC who can tell their side of the story or white people who are actually willing to put in the research and unbiased facts. However, I thought it was very good that Baba had a teacher reiterating how biased these books are and stressing how damaging they can be to the young mind. I feel like oftentimes, even in my experience, it is too often overlooked.

As a closing assignment I ask students to write on one of two topics: 1. Based on your reading, speculate what the "Panther 21" writer you followed might say to a group of young activists today, or 2. Write your own autobiographical essays discussing the challenges you face as organizers.

In the spirit of Shaba Om's comments cited earlier, what makes the overall unit relevant is the degree to which students can take the lessons of the past and apply them to their own movements today. In my class, we connect the dots of a racist system that criminalized a generation of Black people addicted to drugs but declares an "opioid crisis" for the overwhelming number of white people addicted today; we look at the surveillance and repression of so-called "Black Identity Extremists" as a modern-day form of the FBI's COINTELPRO seeking to discredit and disrupt the ongoing Black Freedom Movement. A vital teaching resource, the insights of the Panther 21 in *Look for Me in the Whirlwind* reverberate today. ●

"National parks are the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst."
—Wallace Stegner



"Advocates for Yellowstone may have thought they were preserving a wilderness area. But it is more accurate to say that they were inventing it. . . . Preservation of the country's national parks and Indian removal proceeded in lockstep motion."
—Ted Steinberg

"When Yellowstone was established, the Plains Wars were raging all around the park's borders. It was as though the government paused mid-murder to plant a tree in the victims' backyard. . . . Viewed from the perspective of history, Yellowstone is a crime scene."
—David Treuer

Teaching the Truth About National Parks

BY TIM SWINEHART

National parks were a central focus of my family's vacations when I was growing up. In an old camper that my dad restored, my sister and I peered out the window in awe as we drove through dramatic landscapes on highways like Going-to-the-Sun Road in Glacier National Park or the Trail Ridge Road in Rocky Mountain National Park. As we got older, my family began to venture off the main roads and away from crowds, hiking into more remote areas in Mt. Rainier National Park — through old-growth forests, next to the headwaters of rivers, across glaciers and over mountain passes — with wilderness permits dangling from our backpacks. All these

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experiences played an important role in shaping my early understanding that these seemingly "untouched" landscapes represented nature in its truest form. As a park visitor, I was often reminded of the importance of preserving and protecting our "nation's natural heritage." Visitor centers, roadside signs, and talks by park rangers all helped to reinforce the legacy of the park service and early conservationists like John Muir and Teddy Roosevelt, who I was told had worked to preserve these places for the future enjoyment and recreation of families like mine. Rarely, if ever, was I asked to confront another legacy of our national park system: the removal, dispossession, and genocide of Native Americans that created the "wilderness" areas where I had these experiences.

I've been teaching about the history of national parks in my Environmental Justice class for several years. It's a story that deserves a more prominent place in the U.S. history curriculum as it reveals fundamental aspects of the relationship between conquest, Indigenous peoples, and nature. Too often, teachers address these themes through topics like "manifest destiny" and "westward expansion" that can normalize the massive land theft upon which the United States was built. By contrast, a critical look at the national parks presents an opportunity for students to consider how and why the first parks were created as part of the U.S. government's wars with Native Americans, as the opening quotes above suggest. Discussing the national parks in our classrooms can also raise important questions about the natural world and our relationship to it, as well as contemporary issues of environmental justice, like the role the parks could play in restoring a small, but meaningful, portion of the land stolen from Native peoples.

Standard U.S. history curricula credit Progressive Era figures like Teddy Roosevelt with birthing an ethos of environmental conservation that balanced principles of "preservation" and "efficient use," as public lands were either protected as recreational wilderness areas or designated for resource extraction. Here's an example from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's high school textbook *American History*: "Conservationists like Roosevelt . . . did not [always] share the views of [John] Muir, who advocated complete preservation of the wilderness. Instead, conservation to them meant that some wilderness areas would be preserved while others would be developed for the common good." This equivocation is typical of the history curriculum produced by big textbook corporations; with "some wilderness areas preserved" and "others developed for the common good," readers can assume that everyone wins. But as is true with so much of the environmental thinking inherited from the conservationists of the Progressive Era, this is a narrative that needs complicating in our classrooms. Looking at history through an environmental justice lens demands that we look closer at the legacies of conservationists like Roosevelt whose support for national parks was informed by racist views that American land "should pass out of the hands of its . . . aboriginal owners and become the heritage of the dominant world races."

Given that John Muir and Teddy Roosevelt are generally held in high regard for their contributions to the conservation of our national parks, I want students to see that the racist views they both espoused were not merely distasteful, but played a significant role in shaping ideas and institutions within U.S. environmentalism. I want students to see that the conservation model at the heart of the 20th-century environmental movement in the United States grew out of the genocidal war against Native Americans — in fact, after expelling Indigenous tribes from the areas of Yellowstone and Yosemite, both parks spent decades under military occupation before being handed over to the park service.

Early attempts to "protect" nature are rooted in the exclusion of humans.

I also want students to see that these early attempts to "protect" nature are rooted in the exclusion of humans, an idea eventually ratified in the Wilderness Act of 1964, which describes wilderness as "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

By creating parks that preserved nature *from* active use by Indigenous inhabitants (or anyone else), while "saving" parks *for* purely recreational purposes, the "pioneers" of conservation helped define an American relationship with nature that presumes humans are capable only of exploiting the natural world, not coexisting within it. Finally, I want students to see that these "forefathers" of 20th-century environmentalism helped to build a movement so focused on the preservation of wild places, that it would fail to recognize the fundamental connections between social and environmental justice for decades to come.

To start our lesson on "telling the truth about national parks," I've shown a five-minute video from *Grist* called "Our national parks belong to everyone. So why are they so white?" The video shares historical examples and recent statistics about the racial demographics of park visitors, so I encourage students to take notes on what they find most interesting and/or surprising. It opens with a quote from John Muir, who said about national parks that "Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are

beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity." The narrator explains that although this quote might hold true for families like mine growing up — white and middle class — that the histories of Indian removal and racial segregation within national parks have made them decidedly less welcoming places for communities of color. Delving further into this history, the video introduces students to the influential conservationist Madison Grant, a contemporary of Teddy Roosevelt and John Muir, who not only helped inspire the creation of multiple national parks but was also a widely known eugenicist and advocate for "scientific racism." Grant wrote a book called *The Passing of the Great Race*, praised not only by President Teddy Roosevelt but also by Adolf Hitler, who referred to it as "his bible." Roosevelt and Grant collaborated to pass early conservation laws, and were members of the country's first conservation organization, the Boone and Crockett Club. But Grant's name never shows up in standard high school textbook entries about Roosevelt's conservation legacy. So I appreciate that the *Grist* video leads with a clear-eyed view of the fundamentally racist beginnings of U.S. environmentalism. In students' responses to the video, many emphasized the fact that one of the founders of the national parks movement was a eugenicist, while several others focused on a quote that "every square inch of land in the national park system" was stolen from Indigenous people.

It's helpful for students to evaluate conventional versions of history alongside more critical portrayals like the *Grist* video, so the next source we turn to in our study of national parks is the award-winning Ken Burns documentary *National Parks: America's Best Idea*, which first aired on PBS in 2009. The original episodes are too long to show in class, but I've used a shorter clip from the PBS website called *The Creation of Yosemite National Park*, which tells the story of Muir and Roosevelt's famous 1903

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camping trip that eventually led to protection of the national park as it stands today. I ask students to take notes on how Muir, Roosevelt, and the land of Yosemite are described; I also ask them to think about what might be missing from the documentary.

One student pointed out that Burns' documentary describes Muir as a "famous, kindhearted conservationist who was well loved." Another noticed that the video portrays Roosevelt as "irresistibly charming," "honorable," and "devoted to the protection of nature for future generations." Regarding the land, one student wrote that Yosemite is described as "untouched by humans," and a "temple built by no hand of man." Thanks to the *Grist* video's history lesson we had just watched, most students quickly noticed that the PBS clip misses any mention of the Indigenous people who had lived in and around Yosemite for generations. To be fair, Burns' original longer national park episodes make sporadic attempts to document settler and government violence against Native people, but in a way that suggests the violence was a regrettable remnant of earlier Indian wars, not something integral to the process of creating the parks that we're told are "America's Best Idea."

To follow the Ken Burns clip, I assigned a short excerpt from Mark Dowie's excellent book, *Conservation Refugees: The Hundred-Year Conflict Between Global Conservation and Native Peoples*. The first chapter looks at how the creation of Yosemite National Park became a model for "exclusionary conservation," a process replicated thousands of times around the world, expelling millions of Indigenous inhabitants from traditional homelands in newly created national parks and other "protected" areas. The global implications of "America's best idea" could make its own important unit of study, but for this lesson, I was most interested in having students read Dowie's portrait of Muir, Roosevelt, and the deliberately exclusionary process that created Yosemite. The contrast with the Ken Burns documentary is shocking: Muir describes the Ahwahneechee band of Miwok people living in Yosemite as "ugly, some of them altogether hideous," and argues that a place as grand as Yosemite, "where nature has gathered her choicest treasures," was no place for "such debased fellow beings."

In response to this contrasting portrayal, one student wrote: "This was very clearly left out of the Ken Burns documentary. John Muir was painted as a man who appreciated and worshipped nature when, in reality, he was only a worshiper of the land once the Indigenous people had been displaced." Muir's overt racism is not the only juxtaposition that students take away from the excerpt; Dowie also examines the historical fiction maintained by Muir and repeated in the PBS documentary, that Yosemite was an "untouched wilderness":

> In his writings Muir insisted that Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove had, before the arrival of Euro-American settlers, been unoccupied virgin wilderness. He claimed that any Indians on these

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Public Schools Advocate—a project of The Progressive—is aimed at empowering teachers, students, and policymakers to organize for a stronger public education system. Each week, we publish writing on our website that challenges rightwing efforts to undermine public schools as a truly public service. With a roster of writers that includes veteran teachers, grassroots activists, and policy experts, we also explore what it would take for our schools to become more just and equitable. Since 2013 this project has covered the fundamental struggle for democracy going on around the country, as teachers, parents, and others rally to protect our public schools.
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> lands were temporary nomads passing through. Nothing could be further from the truth. . . . What Muir saw the first time he viewed that bucolic valley might have seemed like wilderness landscape, but it wasn't. It was a tended wilderness, a cultural landscape. In fact, for 4,000 years the valley had been a productive, rotational garden cared for by hundreds of full-time gardeners that sustained generation upon generation of Miwok, Yokut, Paiute, and Ahwahneechees.

This analysis offers one of the most important lessons I've taken away from teaching this topic, and one I was grateful to see reflected in at least one student's response: "By erasing Indigenous history and removing [Indians] from their land, Muir and others painted themselves as heroes fighting for nature. But Muir's idea of the pristine, untouched nature of Yosemite was false, and wouldn't have existed if not for the people he fought so hard to kick out." The lesson here is not only historical, but also has implications for Indigenous demands of reparations for centuries of land theft, embodied by a growing "landback" movement that calls for, among other things, returning land to Indigenous stewardship. By disregarding the long-standing and influential relationships Indigenous peoples had with lands being "preserved" as national parks, their establishment led not only to the loss of Native homelands, but helped create ideas about wilderness that perpetuate the continued denial of Indigenous dispossession to this day.

I've used an additional excerpt with students from Ted Steinberg's book *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History*, about the creation of Yellowstone National Park. Although Congress preserved Yosemite in 1864 as federally protected land, Yellowstone has the distinction of being declared in 1872 the first U.S. national park — and likely the first in the world. Throughout *Down to Earth*, Steinberg uncovers stories of how the natural world is implicated in commonly taught eras and themes from U.S. history, and makes a strong argument that environmental justice belongs in all U.S. history classrooms. Steinberg argues that Yellowstone, as a manufactured "wilderness," was designed not only to meet the desires of adventure-seeking, wealthy tourists and the railroad industry that delivered them there, but ultimately to celebrate the nation's "natural heritage" and to ratify the success of "manifest destiny" and wars of extermination against Indigenous Americans. Steinberg writes:

> Here was a picture-perfect spot to knit together the fledgling nation, a place so majestic and so capable of uniting the country under God that Congress purchased a painting of it . . . to hang in the Capitol. To congressmen such as Henry Dawes of Massachusetts, who worked to establish the park, Yellowstone, as the site was named, represented nature in its most pristine state, a beautiful but harsh wilderness environment so formidable that not even Indians, he asserted, could live there, a place seemingly without history.

Of course, several tribes lived in or near the park for generations and used it for hunting, fishing, and gathering, including the Shoshone, Crow, Blackfeet, and Bannock. As was the case with Yosemite, it took the willful erasure of the tribes' claims to "preserved" lands for advocates like Henry Dawes to declare Yellowstone a pristine wilderness devoid of human history. As one student wrote: "This wasn't solely about the conservation of natural lands, but also about the pioneering and taking of the West as well. It's nice that there was appreciation of the beauty of the land, but it came as part of the expansion of U.S. power." Another student, reflecting on Steinberg's quote that advocates for Yellowstone "invented" a wilderness, shared their concern that "we created this idea that we don't belong in nature or that we are superior to it by manufacturing an environment for our entertainment."

"We created this idea that we don't belong in nature or that we are superior to it."

I recognize that "teaching the truth" about U.S. conservation and the problematic history of national parks could add to a sense of fatalism common with students today — that all environmental conservation efforts are either too insignificant or doomed to repeat mistakes of the past, so why bother? Furthermore, it's possible to mistake this critical analysis for a disregard of the tireless battles to protect locally and federally preserved areas across the United States from the unrestrained development that defines so much of our current landscape.

It's undeniable that in an era of climate chaos, mass species extinction, and unrelenting capitalist exploitation of the natural world, we need stronger environmental protections. At the same time, if we don't examine the roots of the conservation movement that so often espoused the racial superiority of its founders as a motive for protecting natural resources, today's environmental movement may continue to practice the same kind of "exclusionary conservation" core to the

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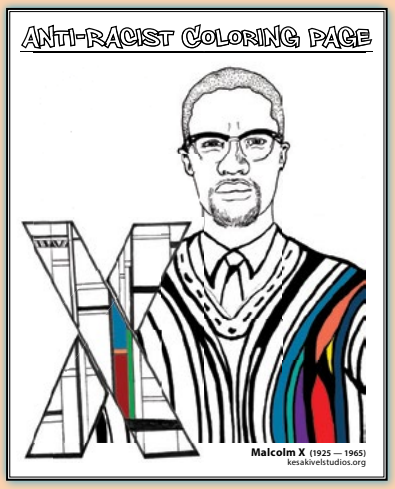

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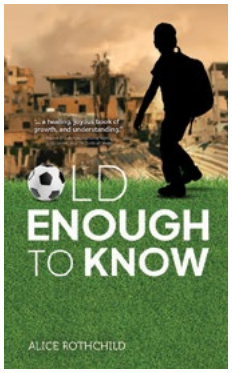

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creation of national parks like Yosemite and Yellowstone.

In fact, some conservation measures suggested as "solutions" to the climate crisis in recent years — notably the U.N. forest protection program known as "REDD" — have been decried by Indigenous groups as neo-colonial land grabs that not only threaten Native sovereignty, but also undermine the ability of Indigenous peoples to protect the very lands they have stewarded for generations.

This is one reason that for the last couple years I've concluded our study of the national parks by listening to a conversation with Ojibwe writer David Treuer, from the *Atlantic* podcast *The Experiment*, called "The Problem with America's National Parks." Treuer is author of the *Atlantic* cover story "Return the National Parks to the Tribes," which prompted national discussion when published in 2021. Although the article is likely too long to use in most classrooms, the podcast offers students the opportunity to hear some of the reasoning and examples that make the article so compelling. Treuer's tone in the podcast is conversational and even humorous, and of his many wonderful points, I'm especially grateful for at least two quotes for students to hear. The first comes when he challenges the notion that humans are separate from nature: "The way that Native people have related to land, you know, we understand that it's not simply something for us to take from or to set aside, but that we have ongoing relationship with it — that we're implicated in the landscape, and the landscape is implicated and changed by our presence on it." This notion of reciprocity between humans and the land, also emphasized in the writings of Indigenous author Robin Wall Kimmerer, offers an important contrast with the "preservation" vs. "efficient use" dichotomy that has defined the U.S. model of conservation since the Progressive Era.

The second Treuer quote I appreciate comes when he imagines how the national parks, and the experience of visitors, might be different if they were returned to the tribes:

> I really believe that if you are standing [in Yosemite], looking at Half Dome, and you are standing in awe of this physical thing, this incredible, beautiful, natural wonder, and you recognize that the only reason you're being allowed to stand there is because that land has been given back to Native control for very specific historical reasons, you're going to be able to look at that as not just a natural wonder, but you'll be able to look at it as though you're looking at the face of this country with a kind of honesty — impossible if we continue business as usual.

This kind of honesty — a historical reckoning with crimes committed in the name of environmental preservation — is exactly what is needed if we hope to nurture an environmental justice movement that can challenge the crises of climate and ecological collapse while simultaneously dismantling the systems of colonization and racial capitalism that have created our current predicament. Treuer's suggestion that the national parks could become one point of entry into this sort of historical reckoning feels like an invitation to all U.S. history teachers to bring that conversation into our classrooms.

Tim Swinehart (timswinehart@gmail.com) teaches at Lincoln High School in Portland, Oregon. He co-edited the Rethinking Schools book A People's Curriculum for the Earth: Teaching Climate Change and the Environmental Crisis.

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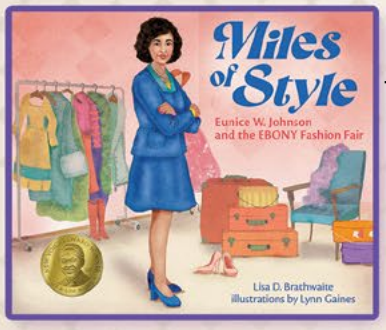

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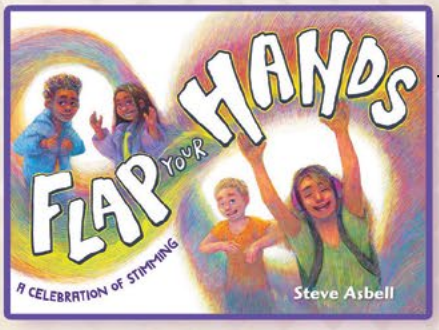

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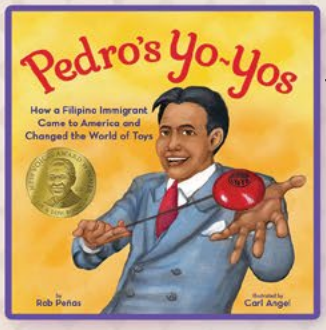

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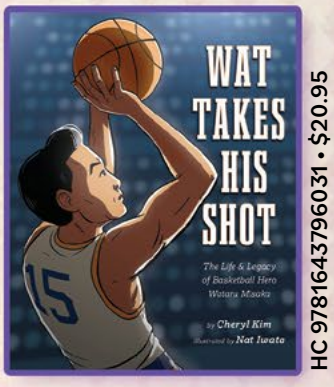

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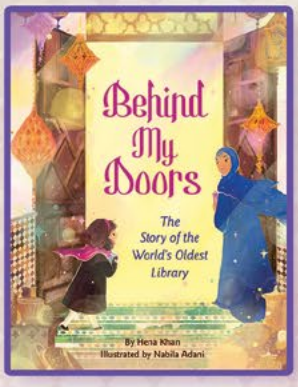

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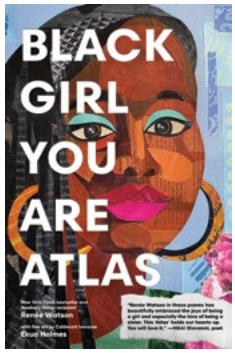
Resources

Curriculum

Black Girl You Are Atlas
By Renée Watson
Art by Ekua Holmes
(Kokila, An Imprint of Penguin Random House, 2024)
96 pp.

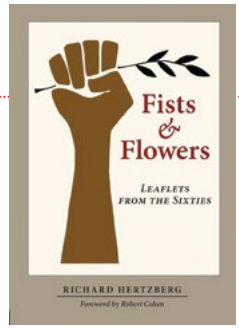


Black Girl You Are Atlas is Renée Watson's first book of poetry. Like her novels, Watson's poems explore the intersection of race, class, and gender. And like her novels, this semi-autobiographical collection celebrates the joys and sorrows of growing up a Black girl in this country. Woven throughout the book are loving odes to Black women — mothers, sisters, friends. Although young people are the book's intended audience, the pieces will resonate across age levels. *Black Girl You Are Atlas* is a teacher's dream, full of diverse styles of poetry from haikus and tankas to pantoums, odes, and free verse. It is Watson's topics — age poems, like "Turning Thirteen," that teachers can draw from to shape lessons that bring together students' lives and the world:

> Rodney King has been beaten by
> LAPD police officers
> and I can't stop wondering if one
> day the cute Black boy at school
> will also be beaten or disappear
> or die
> at the hands of police or white
> supremacists
> like so many Black boys, Black
> men, do

Ekua Holmes' artwork adds a jaw-dropping layer of beauty, rarely witnessed outside of picture books. Her collages will inspire poems on their own.

Fists & Flowers: Leaflets from the Sixties
By Richard Hertzberg
Foreword by Robert Cohen
(The Publishing Circle, 2023)
157 pp.

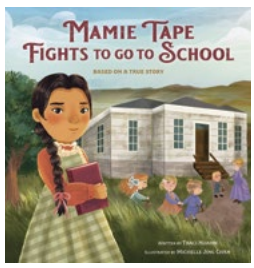


What a cool resource to teach about 1960s social movements. *Fists & Flowers* collects — and celebrates — leaflets from the "Long Sixties," 1963–1973. Richard Hertzberg explains why the book centers on leaflets: "Leaflets express and embody the unvarnished, spontaneous voices of the era. They are historical documents, encapsulating the passions and perspectives of the various political, social, and cultural movements of the Sixties. . . . They are unfiltered, unrestrained, and authentic . . ." The book, divided into seven sections — Civil Rights and Black Power, Anti-Vietnam War, Ethnic Identity and Solidarity, Women's Liberation, Gay Rights, Ecology, and the Counterculture — allows students to gain a visceral appreciation for social movements of that era. Teachers will find the book revealing, inspirational — and delightful.

Picture Book

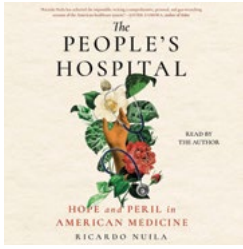
Mamie Tape Fights to Go to School: Based on a True Story
By Traci Huahn
Illustrated by Michelle Jing Chan
(Crown Books, 2024)
40 pp.

This picture book tells the true story of a fight for access to public education by an 8-year-old Chinese American girl, Mamie Tape, and her parents. There were no public schools for Chinese Americans in 1884 in San Francisco when Mamie tried to attend the white school and was turned away. That led her parents to go to court, first at the city level and then with the state. Victories were met with more setbacks. When legally allowed to enroll, school authorities gave Mamie reasons she could not attend: The classes were full (they were not); then that she needed a vaccination by a non-Chinese doctor. During these delays, the school district built a second-rate Chinese American elementary school, later called the "Oriental School." *Mamie Tape* sheds light on one fight for desegregation and quality education in the United States — including children and their families as organizers. It also demonstrates how white supremacists circumvent the law when a court rules for equitable access. Young readers will realize that court rulings are just one part of any campaign for human rights.



Policy and Politics

The People's Hospital: Hope and Peril in American Medicine
By Ricardo Nuila
(Scribner, 2023)
384 pp.



With tender, conscientious storytelling, *The People's Hospital* introduces readers to five uninsured Houstonians, each struggling with life-threatening ailments and denied critical care until they arrive at Ben Taub Hospital, where physician Ricardo Nuila works. There, at the city's largest safety-net hospital, they find a crucial model of compassionate, innovative health care that should inspire policy and practice across the country. *The People's Hospital* diagnoses the state of the U.S. medical system. Nuila traces the disturbing entanglements of insurance companies, doctors, hospitals, and Big Pharma that put earning money far above providing care. In this system, which he shorthands "Medicine Inc.," people's medical problems are metabolized into profit. At the heart of this accounting, however, is a powerful foil: a hospital community that actually treats health care as a human right. Nuila weaves together stories of his patients and family members with tremendous reflections on challenges, consequences, and remedies for the U.S. medical system. Ben Taub, he writes, "is an excellent classroom." *The People's Hospital* is a love letter to that classroom,

"where people find health care and revere it like a treasure." And it is a call to action for practitioners, politicians, and the public to protect the most vulnerable among us by championing science and medicine for the collective good.

Just News
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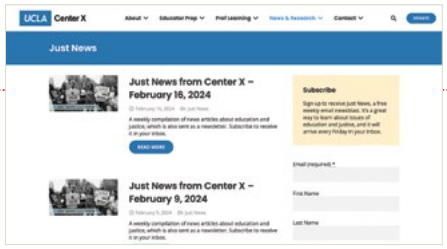
2024

Just News bills itself as "A weekly compilation of news articles about education and justice." These emails arrive free each Friday, and we look forward to them. *Just News* is an indispensable collection of the best and most interesting articles and segments — from newspapers, magazines, radio, and TV — around the country. A recent compilation included an article from the *Nation* about the "voucher bait and switch" that has turned a state surplus in Arizona into an unprecedented deficit, thanks to an immense bill for vouchers to support private school tuition; a *Vanity Fair* article about a Miami school district requiring parental permission for students to participate in Black History Month events; an important *Grist* story from *High Country News* about the connection between colonialism, Indigenous dispossession, land-grant universities, climate change, and Indigenous students; and an *EdSource* article about an innovative San Diego State University program that takes aspiring dual-language educators to Tijuana to learn more about the conditions for students from Mexico, and Central and South America, migrating to the United



States. *Just News* connects us with activists throughout the country and analysis that helps us sort through the forces shaping the lives of children and educators. We are grateful to the UCLA Center X scholar activists who help keep us informed about critical issues in education.

School Support Services Outsourcing: The Original Privatization of Education
(In the Public Interest, 2023)
28 pp.

One type of school privatization that often goes under the radar is the outsourcing of school support staff to third-party, for-profit corporations. When school food service workers, custodians, nurses, paraeducators, and other vital school support staff are contracted out, the public loses control over those services, the quality is threatened, and there is less accountability and transparency. This new report from In the Public Interest exposes why privatizers go after school services and how we can prevent it.

Films

Cured
Directed by Patrick Sammon and Bennett Singer
(Story Center Films, 2020; streaming, 2024)
cureddocumentary.com
82 min. and 37 min. (classroom version)

Following the Stonewall Rebellion of 1969, a key LGBTQ+ rights struggle was the campaign to remove the classification of homosexuality as a mental illness from the American Psychiatric Association (APA) manual of mental disorders. The APA designation of being gay as an illness had ramifications for every aspect of gay people's lives — including employment, health care, legal rights, family, education, and overall human rights. It even hampered people's ability to organize to change the designation since the credibility of LGBTQ+ people was questioned and their ability to meet publicly was limited. This makes the campaign to remove the diagnosis of homosexuality from the APA manual even more extraordinary, as the award-winning PBS film *Cured* so aptly documents. In fact, the film can be used as a primer on how to organize in the face of repression, using a wide range of tactics. *Cured* is highly recommended for courses on 20th-century U.S. history, psychology, social movements, and LGBTQ+ history. To increase accessibility for classroom use, the filmmakers created a 37-minute version.

Reviewed by Bill Bigelow, Linda Christensen, Mimi Eisen, Deborah Menkart, and Missy Zombor

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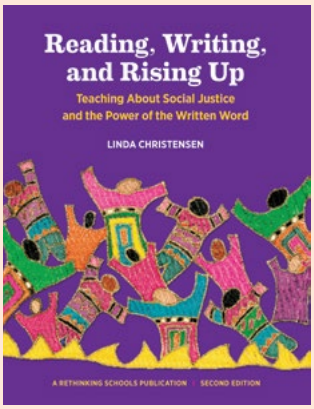
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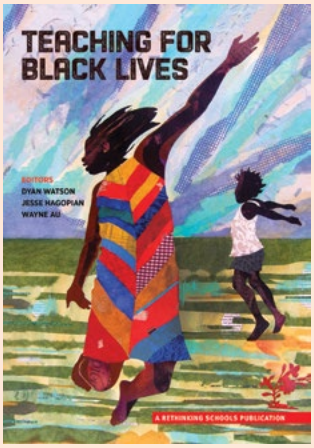

Teaching for Black Lives

Edited by Dyan Watson, Jesse Hagopian, and Wayne Au

Teaching for Black Lives grows out of the movement for Black lives. We recognize that anti-Black racism constructs Black people, and Blackness, as not counting as human life. This book provides resources and demonstrates how teachers can connect curriculum to young people's lives and root their concerns and daily experiences in what is taught and how classrooms are set up. We also highlight the hope and beauty of student activism and collective action.

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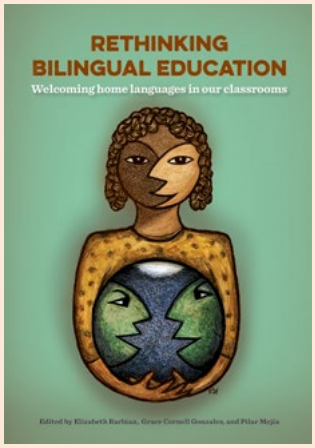

Rethinking Bilingual Education

Welcoming Home Languages in Our Classrooms

Edited by Elizabeth Barbian, Grace Cornell Gonzales, and Pilar Mejía

In this collection, teachers bring students' home languages into their classrooms — from powerful bilingual social justice curriculum to strategies that honor students' languages in schools that do not have bilingual programs. Bilingual educators and advocates share how they keep equity at the center and build solidarity between diverse communities. Teachers and students speak to the tragedy of language loss, but also about inspiring work to defend and expand bilingual programs.

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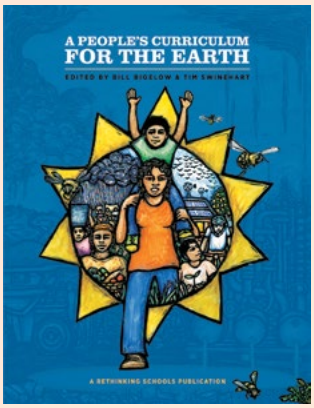

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Edited by Bill Bigelow and Tim Swinehart

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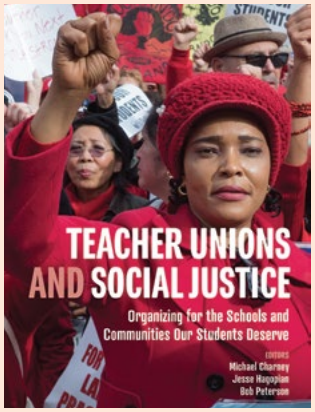

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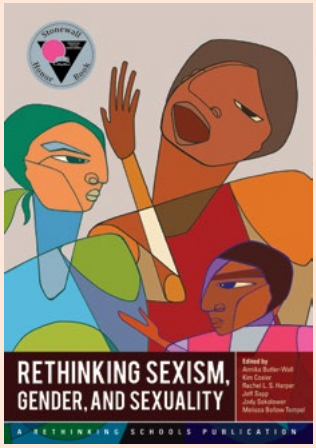

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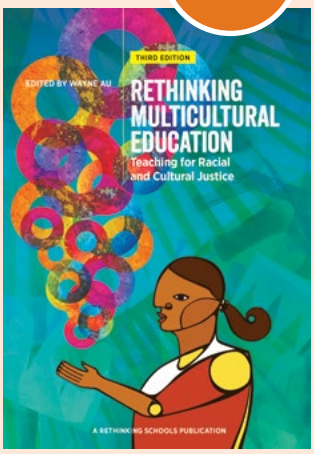

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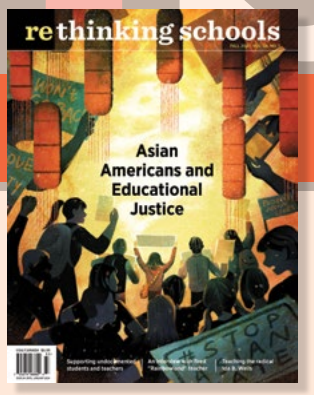

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